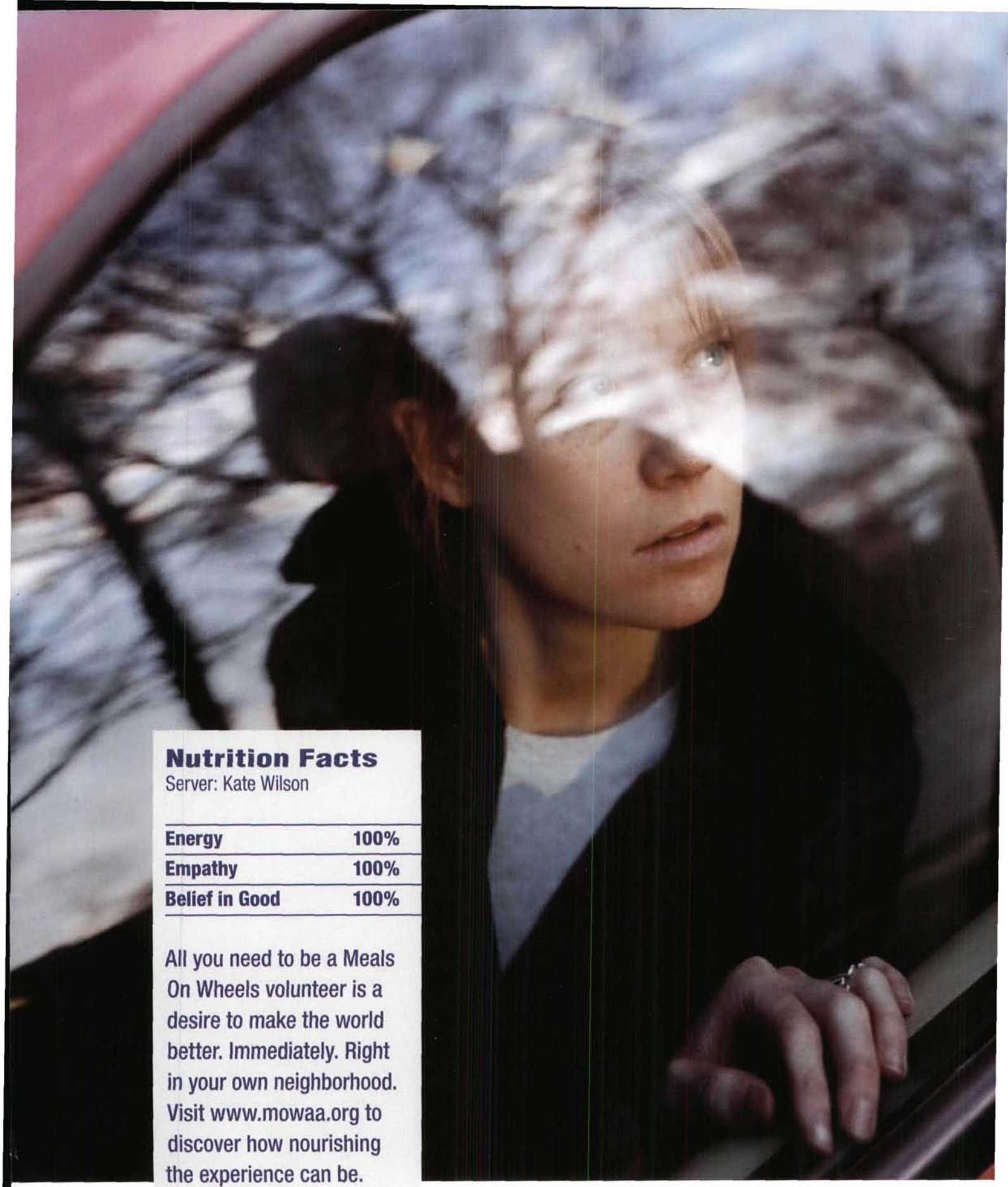

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Washington MONTHLY

VOLUME 39 NUMBER 4
APRIL 2007

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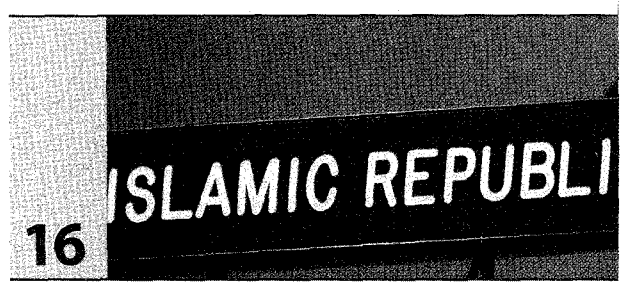

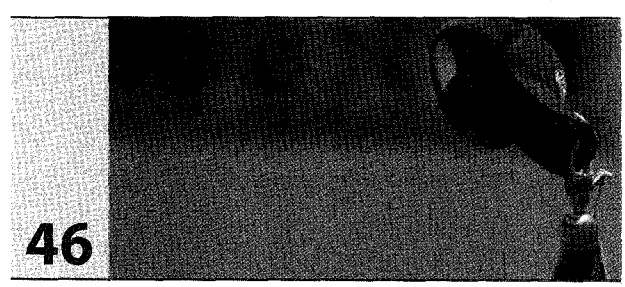

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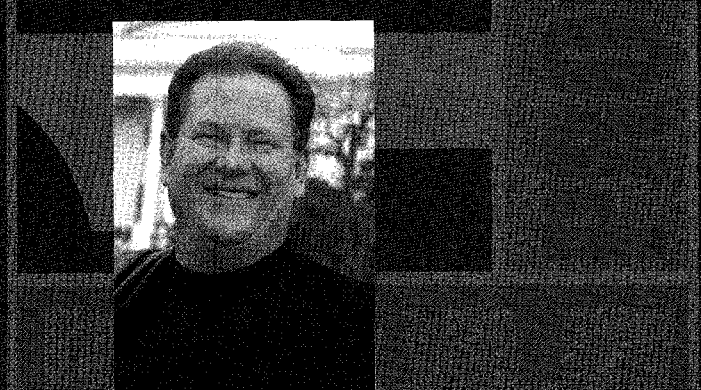

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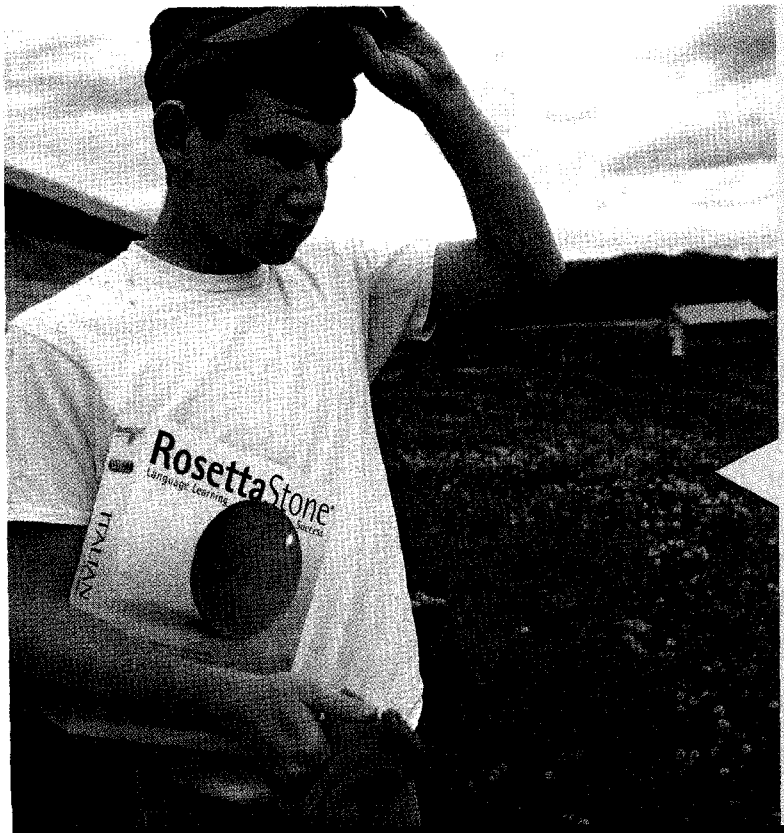

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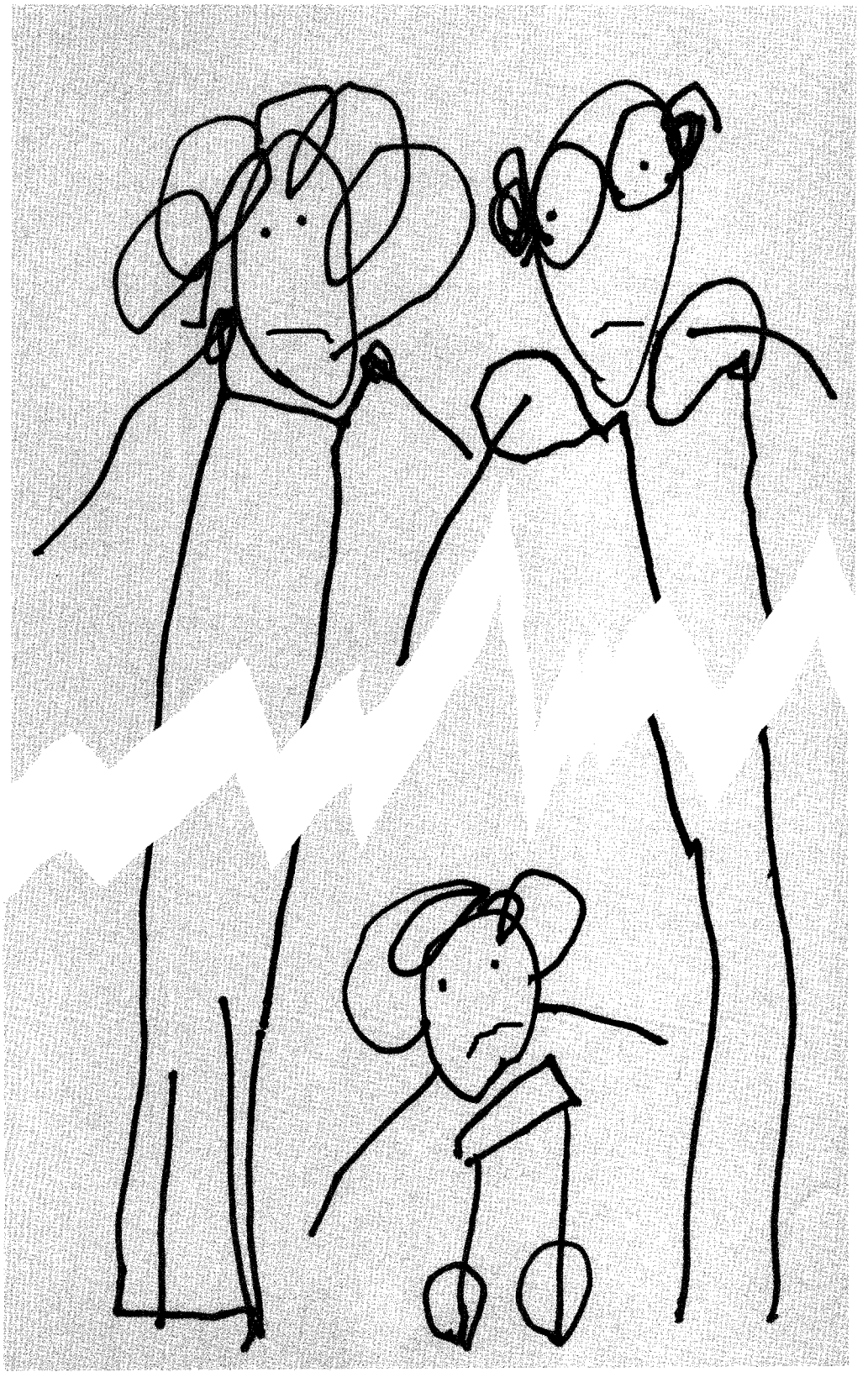

FACT
Hundreds of thousands of American-born children lose their *mom or dad* to detention and deportation.

FACT
In 2006, the U.S. detained over 230,000 immigrants. It deported more than 1.5 million since 1997.

FACT
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FACT
The U.S. government spent over $1 billion in taxpayer dollars last year on an *unjust detention system* that breaks families apart.

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TORTURED LOGIC

The letter below was sent to the Washington Monthly *by Dr. Sharon Brehm, president of the American Psychological Association, and posted on the APA's Web site on January 9, 2007, in reaction to Art Levine's piece "Collective Unconscionable," which appeared in the* Monthly*'s January/February 2007 issue. The letter immediately following Dr. Brehm's, from APA member Frank Summers, was sent to the* Monthly *in response to her posting.*

Regarding "Collective Unconscionable," a few relevant facts that Levine chose not to include in his reporting are:

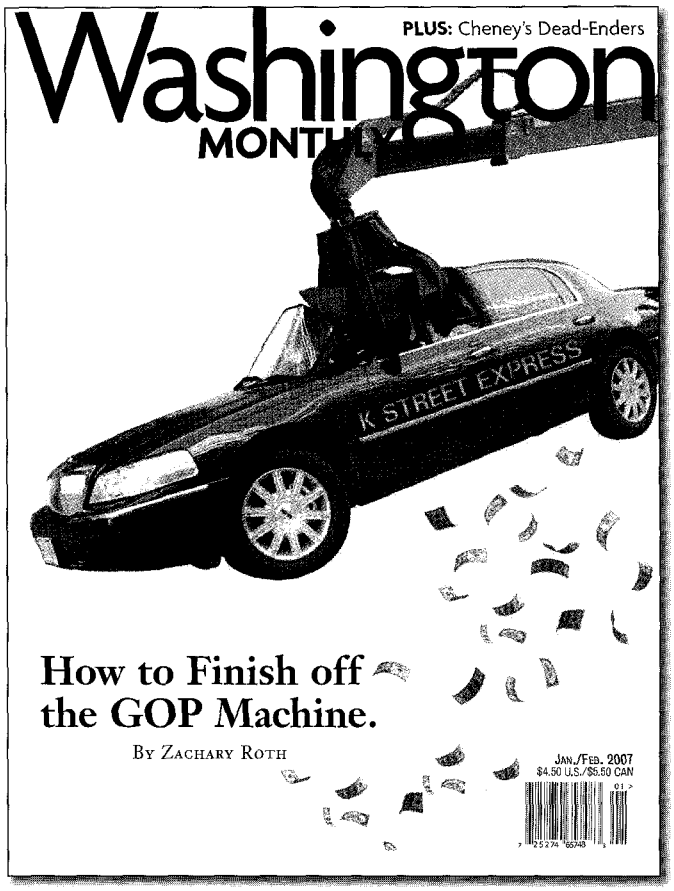
- The American Psychological Association position on torture is clear and unequivocal. Any direct or indirect participation in any act of torture or other forms of cruel, degrading, or inhuman treatment by psychologists is strictly prohibited. No exceptions! Such acts as waterboarding, sexual humiliation, stress positions, and exploitation of phobias are clear violations of the APA's no torture/no abuse policy.

- The principle of "Do no harm" provides the foundation for the association's resolutions against torture dating back to the mid-1980s. In 1985, APA issued a joint resolution against torture with the American Psychiatric Association. Subsequent resolutions prohibiting any psychologist's involvement in torture have also been adopted by the association in 1986, 2005, and 2006.

- The association's position is rooted in our belief that having psychologists consult with interrogation teams makes an important contribution toward keeping interrogations safe and ethical. Our members have a responsibility to intervene to stop acts of abuse wherever they occur and to report such incidents to the appropriate authorities.

- APA has established procedures in place to investigate and adjudicate possible ethical violations by its members. Any allegations that a member has violated APA's strict prohibition against engaging in torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment will be investigated and, if the evidence warrants, adjudicated.

- Furthermore, the association is well aware that tremendous situational pressures often exist when psychologists work in national security settings. Ethical interrogations are based on building a relationship and forming rapport with the person being questioned, whereas abusive techniques are both unethical and ineffective. APA has chosen to stay engaged in the process of working to define and enforce ethical interrogations because we believe that it is the best way to prevent unethical behavior. We know that our members have had a positive effect. For example, one member of the APA Presidential Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security intervened to *stop* abusive detainee treatment at Guantanamo. Another was sent to *prevent* future abuse at Abu Ghraib when abuse was uncovered there.



Sharon Stephens Brehm, PhD
President
American Psychological Association

Dr. Sharon Brehm, the president of the APA, objected to Levine's article on the basis that he neglected to mention that APA has a policy of opposition to "cruel, inhuman, and de-

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grading treatment" and has procedures to discipline any APA member who is involved in such activity. Reading Dr. Brehm's letter, one would think that APA is interested in ensuring the ethical behavior of psychologists who work in detention centers. Unfortunately, APA's behavior does not support the view expressed by Dr. Brehm.

First, it should be noted that when allegations of ethical breaches by psychologists working in Guantanamo were reported in the media, they were quickly and derisively dismissed as "rumor" by Dr. Brehm's predecessor, Dr. Gerald Koocher, without even a cursory consideration of the substance of the charges. Even more tellingly, it has been documented by a number of sources that an APA member, Dr. John Leso, both consulted to and participated in the torture of Mohamed al-Qahtani. The APA was silent in response to the revelation. When this information was given to the APA, the initial response was denial that Leso was an APA member. To this day, there is no indication the APA has taken any action against Leso. There is not one iota of evidence that the APA leadership has made any effort to take any action to ensure the ethical behavior of psychologists working in Guantanamo or any similar detention center.

Frank Summers, PhD
American Board of Professional Psychology and APA member
Chicago, Ill.

> *"The fact that the APA ran from a clear and specific condemnation of torture speaks volumes about its leadership. How we will explain our moral bankruptcy to future generations of psychologists is beyond me."*

Levine deserves great credit for exposing the corruption of the APA in the interrogations of "terror suspects." The fact that the APA ran from a specific condemnation of torture and a definition of what constitutes torture speaks volumes about its leadership. Beyond this reprehensible omission is the APA's failure to provide leadership in terms of understanding how fear can be manipulated to create torture and abuse. As a member of the APA I am appalled. How we will explain our moral bankruptcy to future generations of psychologists is beyond me.

Douglas L. Polcin
Concord, Calif.

Art Levine responds:
The APA's positions against torture and abusive practices are anything but "clear and unequivocal." It's true that the organization has paid lip service to opposing torture and has objected to the Bush administration's pro-torture proposals, as I acknowledged in the article. However, the practical effect of the APA's policies is to abet torture at unaccountable sites like Guantanamo by allowing members to be involved in interrogations. Both the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association bar such participation.

While some APA leaders have occasionally mentioned their opposition to such techniques as waterboarding and stress positions, the APA itself has failed to explicitly condemn such practices by name in any of its formal statements. It hasn't offered guidance to members on these practices in the long-promised, still-unpublished casebook. Nor has it sanctioned any members for their alleged involvement in abuse, or investigated or called for a government or independent investigation into the widely reported role of psychologists in aiding cruel and degrading interrogations. For a full exploration of the APA's sophistry on this topic, I recommend Steve Soldz's article, "Protecting the Torturers: Bad Faith and Distortions From the American Psychological Association," at zmag.com.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Charles Peters is right ("Tilting at Windmills," January/February). The FICA tax is a more significant burden for most American families than the alternative minimum tax, or AMT. However, it is still important to recognize what has gone wrong with the AMT. As Peters said, the AMT was designed to ensure that wealthy Americans would not be able to abuse "loopholes" to avoid paying their fair share of income taxes. It was the news that many wealthy Americans paid no income tax at all that spurred creation of the AMT. One of the most significant of these "loopholes" has historically been the preferential treatment accorded to capital gains. Today, neither capital gains nor dividends are subject to the AMT. Instead, the "loopholes" that push most people into the AMT are state income taxes, medical expenses, and dependency exemptions claimed for children. It is difficult to envision these deductions as tax abuse. Moreover, because some states do not impose state or local income taxes, the AMT's burden falls more heavily on citizens of relatively high-tax localities, where the cost of living is also higher. So the AMT results in inequities across geographical regions as well as across income levels.

Extending the AMT to capital gains and dividends would generate more than enough revenue to exclude state income taxes, medical expenses, and dependency exemptions from its grasp. Doing so would return the AMT to its original goal—ensuring that the superrich do not pay less income tax than their less wealthy counterparts. While not as important as addressing the FICA tax's inequities, this is still a laudable goal. It is also easier, and would generate substantial revenue. There's nothing wrong with picking the low-hanging fruit first.

Robert Ricketts
Professor of Accounting
Texas Tech University

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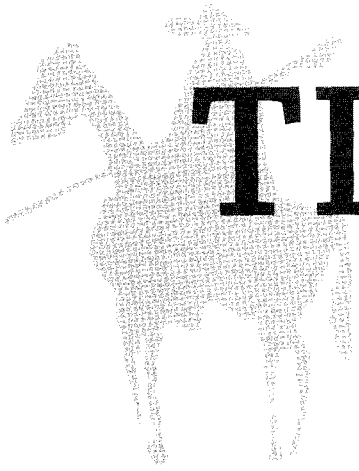

TILTING *at windmills*

By Charles Peters

Money, money, money

You will not be surprised to learn that materialism is increasing. Still, you may be astonished to learn just how great its growth has been. In 1966, 42 percent of UCLA freshmen said it was essential or very important to be "very well-off financially." Today, nearly three-quarters of the freshmen agree with them. And if that isn't enough to thoroughly depress you, according to another survey by the Pew Research Center reported by the Associated Press, "80 percent of 18 to 25 year olds in this country see getting rich as the top goal for their generation."

When it wasn't everything

My own experience with the generation that grew up in the thirties and forties was different. None of my friends at Charleston High School talked about getting rich. Which is not to say that we lacked ambition. But it was for accomplishment and recognition. As our lives developed, only two of us earned as much as $100,000 a year: one who became head of a family company and another who happened to live in New York and be a good lawyer, which made a generous income almost inevitable. As for the rest of us, one became a clergyman, two served in the state legislature, another went to Annapolis and became an admiral. Useful lives were lived. But money was neither the aim nor the result.

I know some of you are saying, There goes Charlie again, telling us how much better his generation was than ours. But all I'm trying to say is that things don't have to be the way they are now.

Rich in spirits

One of the more absurd aspects of today's materialism is its fixation on brand labels, and nowhere does that obsession strike me as more ridiculous than it does with vodka. Sales of premium brands have skyrocketed, with Grey Goose leading the pack with an annual growth rate of 50.3 percent, according to the *Wall Street Journal*'s Deborah Ball. Why do I think this is crazy? Because vodka is tasteless. Some years ago, the local city magazine, the *Washingtonian*, conducted a taste test of vodkas. The winner was Popov, which also happened to be the cheapest. If you're ready to give up your Grey Goose, Popov is still available, at less than a quarter of the price.

> Have you noticed how some journalists, in their hunger to be on television, tailor what they're saying to the taste of the host?

Lincoln was inexperienced too

Barack Obama's announcement of his presidential candidacy in Springfield seemed largely successful, with an impressive crowd braving the nine-degree weather. But I know there was one lesson that he wanted drawn from the day that too many reporters ignored. It was that he would come to the presidency with experience in government identical to Lincoln's: two years in Washington and eight years in the state legislature.

Most observers dismiss state legislature experience as irrelevant to Washington. Having been a state legislator, I know they're wrong. The work of creating and analyzing bills followed by negotiations, persuasion, and compromise is the same. And important issues are involved in every session. Among those dealt with by Obama were tax credits for the working poor, welfare reform, early childhood education, and campaign finance reform.

On capital punishment, he took a stand that departed from conventional liberalism but displayed both courage and thoughtfulness. He does not believe that the death penalty is a deterrent to crime, but supports capital punishment in cases "so heinous, so beyond the pale, that the community is justified in expressing the full measure of its outrage by meting out the ultimate punishment." Think of a heartless serial killer like Ted Bundy and you'll know what Obama means.

At the same time, Obama pushed for measures to make sure that the wrong people don't get executed. His bill requiring mandatory taping of interrogations and confessions was opposed, according to the *Washington Post*'s Peter Slevin, by prosecutors and police organizations and Governor Rod Blagojevich. Still, Obama managed

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to get the bill approved by the senate by fifty-eight to zero, and to persuade the governor to abandon his opposition and sign it. Not bad, not bad at all.

The truth about taxes

Republicans point to the low unemployment rate last year of 4.6 percent, and say that it is a result of the Bush tax cuts. But they forget that the rate was even lower—4.0 percent in 2000—under higher taxes during the Clinton administration.

Indeed, if you go back in history, prosperity and high taxes have often coexisted. In the twenty-two years since the end of World War II that unemployment has been less than 5 percent, taxes have been higher than they are now twenty-one times. In thirteen of those years, the top rate was 70 percent or higher. In nine, it was 90 percent. That's right, unemployment less than 5 percent and a tax rate of 90 percent. Actually, in four of those years the unemployment rate was under 4 percent, the lowest it has been.

I couldn't agree more with whatever you just said

Have you noticed how some journalists, in their hunger to be on television, tailor what they're saying to the taste of their host? Recently, Jim VandeHei, a reporter I respect, appeared on the Fox News show of the conservative John Gibson, talking about Barack Obama.

> ***Gibson**: But he's not helping out by offering a whole lot of heavy-duty specifics in what he has to say, is he?*
> ***VandeHei**: Right. And John, I mean, you're dead-on there.*

VandeHei may have forgotten that Obama has taken a more specific stance on the withdrawing of troops from Iraq than any other candidate. And on the issue of pay for teachers—an issue on which the Democrats habitually sell out to the teachers' union—he has coupled a call for higher salaries with a demand that teachers be accountable for their performance.

La causa incorrecta

A couple of months ago, citing a lead article in the *Washington Post*, we wrote about a group that seems to consider itself the new proletariat—the $100,000-to-$500,000 income group—and *la causa* they champion: relief from the alternative minimum tax. Now comes a lead article on the same subject in the *Wall Street Journal*, with the headline: "Democrats Focus on Tax Relief for the Middle Class." The article identifies households with incomes with as much as $250,000, and those between $250,000 and $500,000, as "the middle and upper-middle class." This ignores the fact that 80 percent of taxpayers make less than $80,000. My point in the earlier "Tilting" was that these people earning under $80,000 need tax relief much more than the $100,000-and-up income group, and the tax that hurts them the most is not the AMT, but the payroll tax. The way to fix it, Maya MacGuineas of the New America Foundation says, is through a tax credit designed to help the people it most adversely affects.

> Republicans won't tell you this: Since World War II, unemployment has been lowest when taxes were highest.

But my point is that all the people in the $100,000 range should stop letting their self-pity prevent them from seeing greater tax injustice, and that they stop using misleading examples to alarm the reader. The front-page story in the *Post* was accompanied by a chart featuring the not-exactly-typical case of a family with six children. Another chart used recently by *Post* columnist Ruth Marcus shows the AMT affecting income as low as $30,000, but you have to read the fine print to see that it is not about the impact of the AMT this year, but its projected effect in 2012.

I have a good many friends in the $100,000-to-$500,000 group, and I know they worry a lot about money. I sympathize with them, but they need to be reminded that their worries come from choosing to pay for private schools, own two or more nice cars, live in ever-larger houses, and pay for that Grey Goose and all the other accessories and amenities that have come to be viewed as essential. Finally, it should be remembered that in many cases all the AMT does is deprive people of the benefits of the Bush tax cuts, which most liberals agree shouldn't have been made anyway.

Get well before 2009

One of the most shameful aspects of this war is that the administration's hopes for a quick victory kept it from planning for the consequences of a longer war and the war's aftermath. The heartbreaking series in the *Washington Post* about the overtaxed facilities at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the resulting failure of care is but one example. And the Bush gang is still not facing reality. The Associated Press reports that although the cost of veterans' care has been rising steadily and steeply, the White House's budget projections assume cutbacks in the cost of medical care for veterans in 2009 and 2010, and a freeze thereafter.

Bush's bind

George W. Bush recently emerged from a meeting with the parents of soldiers killed in Iraq, telling the press: "A lot of them say, 'Mr. President, don't let my son have died in vain.'" He uses their deaths as an excuse to himself and the country to keep chasing "success" in Iraq. I feel for Bush. He can't admit his tragic mistake in invading Iraq because he fears what these parents will think. But, Mr.

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President, these soldiers will not have died in vain if their sacrifice brings you to your senses, and you stop sending more men and women to die.

Starving piggy banks

The Commerce Department reports, according to the Associated Press, that the nation's savings rate for all of 2006 was –1 percent, the worst showing in seventy-three years. Subtract seventy-three from 2006, and we see that the previous low was in 1933—at the height of the Great Depression. If that doesn't make you a bit nervous, consider that the only other year of negative savings in recent times was the –0.4 rate in 2004. And the only similar year in the past was 1932, the other worst year of the Depression.

Foreclosed conclusion

In another clue to the shaky nature of our current prosperity, consider that the typical down payment on a home, according to Kenneth Harney of the *Washington Post*, traditionally has been 20 percent or more. But now, according to a survey from the National Association of Realtors, from mid-2005 to mid-2006 "nearly half of all first-time buyers financed the entire transaction, obtaining mortgages in the full amount of the home price." And the median down payment for all first-time purchasers was just 2 percent. This means that as the value of the house declines, as it has in most areas in recent months, the home buyers owe more to the lender than they can sell the house for. With no savings to fall back on, what's going to happen when a job is lost or a serious illness strikes?

You've learned too much for us to hire you

"Chris" (he doesn't want his real name to be used) started studying Arabic at Middlebury College in 2003. "After the 2003–2004 academic year, I studied Arabic at a very intense level at the Middlebury College Summer Language School," he tells John McCaslin of the *Washington Times*. "I then spent the entire 2004–2005 academic year studying at the American University in Cairo." There, Chris took five Arabic language courses. He then spent the summer of 2006 in Yemen studying Arabic on a State Department fellowship, and now is a highly regarded employee of the Peace Corps. He also had applied to the National Security Agency, the FBI, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the CIA. "I never heard back from any of these agencies," he says, adding that none of the other seventeen students on State Department fellowships in Yemen were subsequently contacted by the State Department.

> Most observers dismiss Obama's state legislative experience as irrelevant to Washington. They're wrong.

Washington in three sentences

Buried in a long *Washington Post* story about the merger of the XM and Sirius satellite radio stations was the most succinct explanation of how Washington really works that I've encountered: "To help the proposed Sirius-XM merger at the FCC, Sirius has hired the communications law firm Wiley Rein. Managing partner Richard E. Wiley is a former FCC chairman. [Kevin] Martin, the FCC chairman, is a former associate of the firm."

Influence efficient

In a related story by the *Washington Post's* Jeffrey Birnbaum, we learn that the new chief of staff of the House Energy and Commerce Committee is Dennis B. Fitzgibbons, who was a lobbyist for DaimlerChrysler. In that role, he was generously compensated to oppose laws requiring cars to use alternative fuels and be more energy efficient. Now he has the most important staff job on the committee that, as Birnbaum puts it, is "charged with deciding whether automakers should be compelled to do either of those things."

One to watch

Conflict of interest is not as black and white an issue as many journalists seem to think. Those who consider it a simple matter should recall Michael Kinsley's question: "Is it a conflict of interest for a mother to have a second child?"

Still, cases like Fitzgibbons should arouse suspicion. And while we should not leap to the assumption that he will continue to do the bidding of his former employers, it is prudent to keep a watchful eye on his performance. Such scrutiny might just help keep him on the straight and narrow.

The gravy train

Another story that arouses suspicion comes from the *Post's* Elizabeth Williamson, who reports: "Days after Jennifer Esposito became majority staff director of the House transportation panel's subcommittee on railroads, her father, Sante Esposito, and brother Michael Esposito signed up as railway lobbyists." Which is not only suspicious, it comes perilously close to being, in the immortal words of George Tenet, a slam dunk. It also illustrates at least one hole in the new House ethics rules.

Who knew ethics could taste so good?

Another possible hole in those rules was revealed by the *Wall Street Journal's* Jeanne Cummings, writing about the lobbyist Heather Podesta. For Washington Senator Maria Cantwell, Ms. Podesta flew in four female chefs to prepare one course each for a fund-raiser. For Senator

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Debbie Stabenow, he had Alice Waters, founder of California's Chez Panisse, prepare meals at an event. It seems odd that the rules that now keep Podesta from picking up the dinner check for Cantwell or Stabenow would still allow her to pay the transportation costs, expenses, and fees for these chefs.

Are we all in this fight?

"Soldier's Death Strengthens Senators' Anti-war Resolve," by the *Washington Post*'s Jonathan Weisman and Ann Scott Tyson, tells a touching story about how John Kerry and Chris Dodd were affected by the death of a soldier they had gotten to know on a visit to Iraq. It has "radicalized Dodd" and "energized Kerry" in their opposition to the war.

Is it not possible that more senators and congressmen would have opposed the war, and done so with greater vigor, if they too had known soldiers? That's why I support a draft that takes people from all classes and educational backgrounds. When we enacted such a draft in 1940, we did not leap to war. Far from it. It was not until Japan attacked us and Hitler declared war against us that we declared war against them. And we did not escalate in Vietnam until Lyndon Johnson and General Lewis Hershey had fixed the draft to exclude the privileged. A truly democratic draft would be our greatest protection against another Iraq.

He can't be wrong all the time

I understand why some Democrats have become automatically anti anything that Bush proposes. After all, he's been wrong so often. But I urge them to take a serious look at a couple of the administration's recent proposals. One, by Bush's secretary of agriculture, Mike Johanns, would end farm subsidies for around 80,000 wealthy farmers who definitely do not need federal assistance. The other, on health insurance, actually has a Robin Hood element that should appeal to Democrats. It will, in effect, tax the richer recipients of health insurance to finance tax breaks to help the less affluent get insured. Of course, universal health care should be our goal. But Bush's proposal may be close to the best deal we can get now.

Borrowed time

If you're worried about those no-down-payment mortgages, you will not be comforted to know that a rapidly increasing number of mortgages are in default. Called "sub-prime," these mortgages have often been issued on the basis of little evidence of the home owners' credit-worthiness. To compound the problem, many mortgages, and not just those of the subprime variety, require payment on the interest only in the early years, meaning that home owners are in for a major shock when payments on the principal begin to be required. Many mortgages issued in 2005 and 2006 are "defaulting at high velocity," according to the *New York Times*' Gretchen Morgenson, who wonders what's going to happen to all the mortgage-backed securities held by pension funds, hedge funds, banks, and insurance companies. In just one example cited by *Newsweek*'s Robert Samuelson in the *Washington Post*, "HSBC—a major bank holding company—announced more than $10 billion in losses" on subprime mortgages. Sleep tight.

At least Dusty never studied in Yemen

Remember Kyle "Dusty" Foggo, the former number three man at the CIA? His name came up in a less than flattering context during the emergence of the Duke Cunningham scandal. Now the suspicions aroused back then have taken a significant step toward confirmation. Dusty, in an eleven-count indictment by a federal grand jury, has been accused of "accepting lavish vacations, helicopter rides, and private jet flights from [Brent] Wilkes," who, under an accompanying indictment, is charged with "conspiracy, bribery, money laundering, and unlawful monetary transactions to Cunningham in return for government contracts," according to Jerry Seper of the *Washington Times*. Apparently the grand jury concluded that there was a relationship between such largesse as the $32,000 Wilkes paid "for Mr. Foggo to join him on a vacation to Hawaii ... [and] the award of a $2.4 million contract for Mr. Wilkes' firm to provide water, first aid supplies and household items to CIA agents operating in war zones, including Afghanistan and Iraq."

Dusty, you will recall, seems to have gotten his job because former CIA Director Porter Goss was impressed by his skill at planning trips. This reminds me of how Michael Brown was hired on the basis of his experience running horse shows. You have to be impressed by the ability of Bush administration personnel recruiters to think outside the box. Not everyone would have seen the International Arabian Horse Association and the American Society of Travel Agents as the most logical places to look for senior government executives. WM

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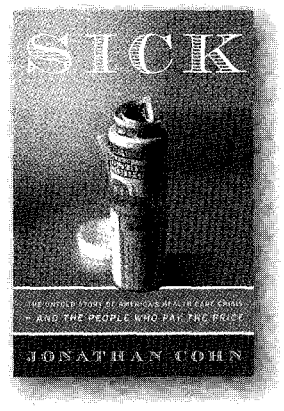

OF ALL THE FORMS OF INEQUALITY, INJUSTICE IN HEALTH CARE IS THE MOST SHOCKING AND INHUMANE.

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

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TEN MILES SQUARE

"... such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) ... [shall] become the Seat of the Government of the United States"
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

Miranda's Plight

A GOP operative fights on.

By Rebecca Sinderbrand

Manuel Miranda is a charming, avuncular GOP operative in his mid-forties who is known in Republican circles as "Manny." In 2004, he enjoyed fifteen minutes of more widespread fame. Miranda, who at the time was the judicial nominations counsel to then Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist and the Senate Judiciary Committee, had downloaded memos detailing the Democratic judicial nomination strategy from an internal committee server and leaked them to conservative groups and the *Wall Street Journal*. When Miranda's role was discovered, Utah Senator Orrin Hatch called the act "simply unacceptable." In the uproar that followed—dubbed "Memogate" by the Washington press—Miranda was driven from his job in disgrace. The *Hill* later declared that he "had one foot in the political graveyard."

In some circles, however, Miranda's conduct wasn't exactly a death sentence. In February 2006, David Keene, the chairman of the American Conservative Union, spoke of Memogate when he presented Miranda with the organization's Reagan Award, saying, "[Democrats] no doubt thought that it would all end with that, that Manny Miranda would slink off into the darkness and never be heard from again ... But it turns out that he's more than just a principled conservative: he's a man who doesn't know the meaning of surrender." Miranda's reputation for ruthless tactics and political skill, not to mention his formidable network of conservative contacts, ensured that his calls would still be returned. In the days after the Republican defeat in the midterm election last November, Miranda again picked up the phone. He had a big idea.

Miranda had observed the Republican meltdown over immigration from afar during the midterm campaign, and thought he'd figured out a way to get the party out of its bind. His answer was to forge a grand coalition on the issue by bringing religious conservatives—who had withheld their considerable clout from the debate in 2006—into the fold.

That's not such a simple proposition. According to a Pew poll last year, close to two-thirds of evangelicals believe illegal immigrants represent a threat to American culture. On the other hand, a sizable minority of evangelicals believe their faith compels them to help immigrants in need. So Miranda, the deeply observant Catholic son of Cuban immigrants, came up with a compromise: a one-off amnesty for the undocumented relatives of U.S. citizens, in exchange for a permanent change to the Fourteenth Amendment that would deny citizenship to the American-born children of illegal immigrants. The bargain was a shrewd one. Conservatives who take a hard line on immigration are particularly enraged about what they call "anchor babies": newborns who gain automatic citizenship and make it harder for the government to send their undocumented families home. At the same time, by offering a onetime legalization for the illegal relatives of U.S. citizens, Miranda was trying to address a major concern of those evangelicals who worry that a tough policy will break families apart.

By the weekend after the election, Miranda had developed a mission statement for a grand conservative alliance on immigration. Despite—or perhaps because of—the Memogate affair, he was able to enlist some of the brightest lights in conservatism, corralling them at

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gloomy postelection conferences at think tanks and on the Hill. Miranda named the new venture Families First on Immigration. By the time he began discussing FFI openly in conservative circles, in early December, he'd signed on a number of conservative icons: Keene; Gary Bauer, the leader of American Values; Lou Sheldon of the Traditional Values Coalition; Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association; and direct-mail pioneer Richard Viguerie. On January 8, FFI surprised Washington with a letter to President Bush and the new Democratic leadership. "We believe that if we can leave the confines of this past year's debate, we can help you formulate and win wide support for a coherent immigration achievement," the letter read. Miranda's ultimate aim was bold: to force presidential candidates to pledge to major immigration reform on his terms in the lead-up to the 2008 election.

Miranda has succeeded at these kinds of quixotic ventures before. A sturdy, round-faced man, he radiates the air of an efficient small-town mayor. Washington is filled with "Friends of Manny"—students and activists he's nurtured into positions within the conservative establishment. "Guys like Manny, they know the Hill. But it's more than that," says Rabbi Aryeh Spero, the leader of Caucus for America, and another founding member of FFI. "He can take an idea from start to finish, and make it work."

Miranda made his first foray into politics in the leadership of the Second Stewards Society, a controversial male-only secret society at Georgetown University. He graduated in the early 1980s and became a lawyer, joining the law firm White & Case. But he never quite left campus. Later that decade, he became head of the Cardinal Newman Society, engaging the conservative Catholic educational organization in the culture-war battles then gripping American universities. About ten years ago, he decided that Georgetown needed a conservative student women's group to combat the profile and feminist rhetoric of the campus women's center. Despite the fact that Miranda wasn't a student—or a woman—he wrote the organization's constitution and carefully vetted female undergraduates to front the group. Called the Women's Guild, it flooded the campus with a compendium of 1950s-era romantic advice, and although its membership barely cleared double digits, the *Washington Post* Style section devoted a front-page feature to the group—failing to note Miranda's role in its creation.

JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

A Manny-splendored thing: Manny Miranda is up to his old tricks.

After resigning from his Judiciary Committee job in 2004, Miranda faced unemployment and a Justice Department investigation. Neither slowed him down. He started an organization from his townhouse initially called the National Coalition to End Judicial Filibusters, later the Third Branch Conference, devoted to masterminding the conservative movement's strategy on judicial nominations. As the group's chairman and only official staffer, he engineered two of the movement's most acrimonious victories using his wide personal network, which includes conservative icons, many Second Stewards alumni and protégés, and numerous grassroots organizations. Despite the TBC's small size, he also became a reliable media expert on the subject of judicial nominations. In 2005, Miranda helped whip up pressure on Republican senators to support the so-called "nuclear option," which would have ended the Democratic minority's right to filibuster judicial nominations. The tactic allowed the GOP-controlled Senate to confirm several judges that Democrats had initially opposed, making Miranda a conservative folk hero. Later that year, Miranda organized the massive conservative opposition that led to the demise of Harriet Miers's Supreme Court nomination.

In some ways, FFI resembles Miranda's other successful ventures. For one thing, it has no full-time staff—in fact, there don't appear to be any staffers at all besides Miranda. It also seemingly has no mailing address, Web site, official phone number, or public e-mail address. In other ways, it's a departure. This time, Miranda is attempting an intervention rather than an attack, and already there are signs that his proposed compromise may be too clever by half. Richard Viguerie, for instance, objected to the limited legalization Miranda proposed in his January letter, stating that any Republican seeking the presidential nomination must hold a firm line on immigration. "I know what Manny's trying to do; that's why I signed on to begin with. But there's a line here," Viguerie says. "Any Republican candidate who tries to compromise on [amnesty] will lose in 2008, and I and a lot of others will work very hard to make that happen." And last month, when Miranda told the news organization Inter Press Service that if the Minutemen, the anti-immigration volunteer border patrol, "agreed to our fundamental principles, they could join on," he was swiftly criticized by Hispanic evangelical leaders, who represent the fastest-growing segment of the evangelical population. "It's great that white evangelicals are finally speaking out on this issue," says Rev. Samuel Rodriguez Jr. of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. "But so far, I'm not sure I'm comfortable with what we're hearing." Miranda, who has never found a political dustup he couldn't win, may finally have met his match.WM

Rebecca Sinderbrand is an editor of the *Washington Monthly*.

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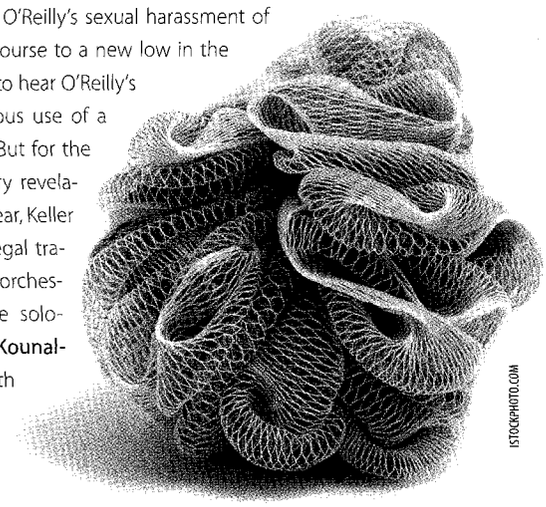
THE *Monthly* INTERVIEW

Igor Keller, Composer

For most of us, the strange saga of Bill O'Reilly's sexual harassment of a female colleague dragged public discourse to a new low in the fall of 2004. Nobody ever really wanted to hear O'Reilly's unorthodox suggestions for the amorous use of a loofah—or, as he termed it, a "falafel." But for the Seattle composer Igor Keller, the tawdry revelations held the promise of high art. Last year, Keller wrote an oratorio based on O'Reilly's legal travails for a twenty-eight-piece chamber orchestra, twenty-six-voice chorus, and three soloists. The *Washington Monthly*'s **Markos Kounalakis** and **Peter Laufer** spoke recently with Keller about the work, which premiered in Seattle in January.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Falafel, anyone?

WM: Can you explain the title of your oratorio, *Mackris v. O'Reilly*?

IK: Well, it's based on the legal complaint lodged against Bill O'Reilly by one of his producers, Andrea Mackris, in October of 2004.

WM: One excerpt has the lyric, "Next time you'll come up to my hotel room and we'll make this happen." What's that about?

IK: That part is basically the straw that breaks the camel's back. Andrea Mackris has decided to pursue charges against him because he has been so bullying and creepy for so long that she didn't feel she had any other choice. This almost comes at the very end of the work, the thirtieth of thirty-one parts. An oratorio is a musical dramatic work with no scenery, kind of in the vein of the *Messiah*.

WM: O'Reilly's *Messiah*?

IK: Yes, indeed. It's two and a half hours long.

WM: And what we hear comes from transcripts?

IK: Directly from the transcript—it's the central charges. I actually set about twelve pages of legal text to music.

WM: As you were researching this, what did you discover about the character of Bill O'Reilly?

IK: The strange thing was, when I began this work I really had no opinion about Bill O'Reilly. I knew that my mom liked him very much, to the point where she named her dog after him. I thought of it more as an interesting character sketch. But as I got deeper into the text, I realized it's kind of indicative of what's going on in this country right now. This is the sort of thing that happens when a person thinks they have almost unlimited power, and is also delusional and paranoid.

WM: It's a combination of hubris and the classic Greek tragedian tradition.

IK: Exactly. I knew that the text would be dry, because it's legalese, and anything drier than that would be the Sears catalog. So the music had to carry it. And O'Reilly gets all the best arias. One critic said that at many points you're actually rooting for O'Reilly, but you can't totally get on his side. You ultimately take the side of Andrea Mackris, because of all this crass stuff that's going on.

WM: Of course, the cliché is that truth is stranger than fiction. But these days it does seem hard to actually sat-

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irize current events. Is this something you're seeing in theater—people increasingly turning to reality for material?

IK: My original inspiration for this was a song cycle by a pianist in San Francisco named Bryant Kong. He wrote a piece called *The Poetry of Donald Rumsfeld*. It's Rumsfeld quotes set to music for piano and soprano. And I got thinking, Why can't I make O'Reilly sing? Because there are these blocks of text throughout the complaint where he speaks for a long time about certain things, be it how Al Franken's finished, or his Caribbean sex fantasies or whatnot. They were quite easy to set to music once you had the tune. The words just fell into place.

WM: Are you in contact with O'Reilly's people so that he's familiar with what you're doing and puts you on the show?

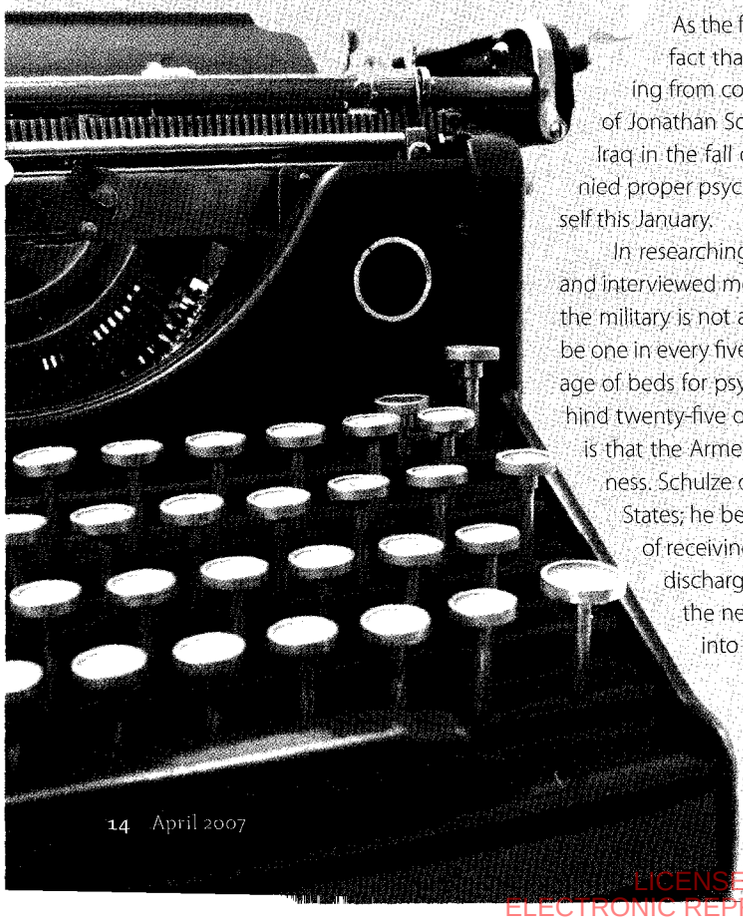
IK: No. [*Laughs.*] He has long said that he will never speak of this incident again. Actually, that's the last part of the oratorio.WM

Markos Kounalakis, the president of the *Washington Monthly*, and author **Peter Laufer** co-host the weekly program, *Washington Monthly on the Radio*, from which this interview was adapted.

THE *Monthly* JOURNALISM AWARD

Charles M. Sennott

Boston Globe, February 11, 2007
"Told to Wait, a Marine Dies."



As the fourth anniversary of the start of the Iraq War approaches, it's a lamentable fact that America does not provide adequate medical services to soldiers returning from combat. The *Boston Globe*'s Charles M. Sennott provides the tragic example of Jonathan Schulze, a twenty-five-year-old Marine from Minnesota who returned from Iraq in the fall of 2006 with severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). After being denied proper psychiatric treatment from a Veterans Administration hospital, he hanged himself this January.

In researching Schulze's story, Sennott pored through some 400 pages of documents and interviewed members of the Schulze family and VA health professionals. He explains that the military is not adequately helping Iraq War veterans who suffer from PTSD, estimated to be one in every five soldiers. One reason for this may be that VA hospitals have a critical shortage of beds for psychiatric in-patients: Schulze, for example, was placed on a waiting list behind twenty-five other veterans for one of the hospital ward's twelve beds. Another reason is that the Armed Forces in general seem to lack a complete understanding of mental illness. Schulze displayed clear signs of PTSD while waiting for his discharge in the United States; he became so violent that he was sentenced to one month in the brig. Instead of receiving psychiatric care, however, he was demoted and sent home on a "general" discharge; when he later sought help from the VA, he was told twice to come back the next day. The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched an investigation into his case.

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SPENCER PLATT/GETTY

Averting the Next Gulf War

The troop "surge" in Iraq is also a signal to Iran—but stopping Tehran's nukes for good will require a different kind of leverage.

By Wesley Clark

The world seems headed for a showdown in the Middle East within the next two years over the issue of Iranian nuclear capacity. The stakes are high. On the one hand, there is the emergence of a new nuclear power, whose rhetoric and revolutionary record seem to pose an existential threat to Israel and challenge centuries of Sunni dominance of Islam. On the other hand, there is an explosive set of potential military actions and economic repercussions, which could begin with a sustained air and naval campaign and end with massive economic and political upheavals. The environment is emotionally charged, too, with a triumphalist Iranian government, a failing U.S. military intervention in Iraq, a weakened U.S. president, and severe tensions between Sunni and Shia sects throughout Islam. Heading into

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a presidential election—and the end of the Bush administration—the ramifications of all this make Democrats, and anyone else seriously forecasting global trends and economic forces, more than a little concerned. Major news magazines like *Newsweek* and the *Economist* have featured Iran as the next major crisis.

But just how acute is the problem with Iran? What is the likely outcome? And how should our policy makers and political leaders gain a peaceful resolution? Most importantly, how much leverage, and what kind of leverage, does the United States really have? There is much more than is visible.

If rhetoric is to be believed, the collision is inevitable—a new "beast" is arising in the East. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has said that it would be "suicidal for a country to attack Iran," adding that "we must not bend to threats." The rhetoric from Washington has been equally tough, even as the diplomacy plays out in the United Nations. President George W. Bush memorably named Iran as a member of the "axis of evil," and last year he stated unequivocally that Ahmadinejad's hostility toward Israel is a "serious threat. It's a threat to world peace ... I made it clear, I'll make it clear again, that we will use military might to protect our ally Israel."

The perception that we're moving toward a crisis isn't just based on rhetoric. Actions have accompanied the tough language. The Iranians have a serious nuclear program, and the United States is gearing up its response capabilities. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has reported major unresolved issues with Iran's nuclear efforts, suggesting that Iran is engaged in a covert effort to produce nuclear weaponry. These issues include unreported design work and acquisition of uranium enrichment centrifuges; experiments with enriching uranium and creating plutonium; hidden nuclear sites; uranium purchases abroad; design work on uranium metal fabrication; and evidence of the presence of highly enriched uranium, secret testing sites, explosive facilities, and interests in warhead designs. Iran, meanwhile, continues to construct new nuclear facilities and is moving forward with the installation of a full-scale uranium enrichment facility—all the while denying that it seeks nuclear weapons.

The timeline of the Iranian effort is unclear. Some evaluations indicate that Iran is very close to having a nuclear weapons capability. Other assessments suggest that they are years away from producing such weaponry. The key is how soon Iran will be able to produce enriched uranium in sufficient quantities. It is generally assumed that Iran will be able to do so within two years after bringing their cascade of 3,000 centrifuges at Natanz online. Israeli sources are the most concerned, predicting that Iran could become nuclear capable in 2008.

The United States has supported a diplomatic effort by Britain, France, and Germany to persuade Iran to cooperate with the IAEA. Thus far, however, the U.S. has refused to talk directly with Iran until it temporarily halts its nuclear enrichment activities. The UN Security Council agreed in December to impose possible further sanctions on Iran if it didn't comply with the IAEA requests for information and transparency.

In the meantime, the United States has escalated its military readiness and pressure in the region. This has involved the deployment of additional naval strike forces, specific targeting of Iranian elements inside Iraq, and a higher-profile public-relations effort aimed at tying Iran to the difficulties inside Iraq.

So much for the facts. What are the respective strategies? The Iranians have continued to profess a need for nuclear power and a distrust of relying on outside sources of nuclear fuel. But possession of nuclear weaponry would boost Tehran's power in the region, act as a deterrent to the United States, and perhaps—and this is the most sensitive point—enable Iran to increase pressures against Israel. The Iranians may believe, for instance, that possessing nuclear weapons and the long-range missile systems to deliver them would enable them to provide "extended deterrence" to Hezbollah in Lebanon, implicitly threatening Israel if Israel acts against Lebanon. It must be assumed that the Iranians are seeking nuclear weapons.

But Tehran also knows that it will pay a price to gain nuclear capabilities. Certainly this price will involve continued pressure and hostility from the United States; possible further UN sanctions; covert attack by various groups sponsored, presumably, by the United States or Israel; and perhaps even U.S. air and naval strikes against Iran's nuclear and military facilities. For the Iranians, then, the question is how to reduce the price they must pay for nuclear weapons. They can do this by five principal means. They can prolong any negotiations by diplomatic stratagems, now giving the impression of softness, then toughening up, and all the while moving steadily forward with their nuclear programs so that eventually Iran's possession of nuclear weapons becomes a fait accompli. They can inflict chaos and casualties against U.S. troops on the ground in Iraq, diminishing the

Military conflict is not inevitable, and neither is Iranian nuclear weaponry. It is a matter of strategy and leadership.

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United States' reputation, tying down American troops, and posing a clear threat should the U.S. act militarily against Iran. They can create a perception that worldwide terror strikes would be unleashed in retaliation for any U.S. military action against Iran. They can divide the United States from its regional allies by flexing power through Hezbollah and Syria, while reaching out directly to Sunni states; and by using their influence with large Shia communities in the region to provide domestic pressures to moderate the hostility of Sunni-led states. They can seek countervailing relationships with major powers like Russia and China. All these Iranian efforts are already under way. By December 2006, Iranian statements were practically giddy, declaring with triumphalist rhetoric that the United States had failed in Iraq, and demanding our strategic withdrawal from the region.

For the United States, the conventional thinking would be that we should raise the price that Iran must pay for nuclear weapons: make the sanctions tougher; drive Iran further into diplomatic, financial, and economic isolation; work to destabilize the Iranian regime; inhibit Iran's ability to affect the outcome in Iraq; work to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian crisis and use any progress to diminish Iran's regional appeal; and convince Iran of a credible U.S. threat. All of this is also under way, assisted by American friends in the region such as Saudi Arabia. The Saudis and other Sunni OPEC members are also probably working to drive down the price of oil, which they believe is one of the most powerful methods to undercut Iran.

Some in the administration are gratified by the signs of success they see, such as the defeat of Ahmadinejad's party in the recent municipal elections, a rising rate of inflation inside Iran, a faltering oil production forecast, and some apparent Iranian hesitancy in advancing both the nuclear program and the hostile rhetoric. According to Sunni observers in the region, Iran was surprised by the U.S. "surge" in Iraq and President Bush's stubborn defense of his policy. And the departure of some of the more hard-line leaders inside the administration—Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and UN Ambassador John Bolton, as well as the earlier departures of Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith—has enabled the administration to take some of the edge off its rhetoric, if not to change its impassioned resistance to Iran.

The perception that we're moving toward a crisis isn't just based on rhetoric. Actions have accompanied the tough language.

The result is a more nuanced, behind-the-scenes struggle. Ultimately, this struggle will be played out as a test of wills of the competing sides: Iran's determination to acquire nuclear weapons against Washington's—and Sunni Arab—determination that they not get them. With the active Saudi role as a key regional ally of the United States and a trusted intermediary, the Iranian situation could take on overtones of the long-standing six-party negotiations with North Korea. It's not difficult to see the Saudis eventually brokering a statement of principles which could form the basis for a behind-the-scenes dialogue between the United States and Iran, hosted in Riyadh or another state in the region. Could such a dialogue succeed in defusing the crisis short of war, and short of an Iranian nuclear capability?

Here are the potential stumbling blocks. First, the administration's approach to Iran is premised on the success of the military surge in Iraq. (I wouldn't have picked a military reinforcement of Baghdad—something we've tried and failed at twice before—as the key element of the strategy, but that decision has already been made.) If the surge fails, then Iran's respect for American strength will evaporate further, and it will be the Iranians who have gained leverage over us. Iran, of course, is not a neutral bystander, and will work actively to shore up resistance to the surge, though perhaps not before pausing to assess U.S. tactics and procedures.

Second, U.S. success in Baghdad is also critical in maintaining the alignment with the Sunni Arabs, who would see a U.S. failure as demanding both a more aggressive Saudi assistance to the Baathist insurgency and a more open struggle against Iran and its Shia sympathizers throughout the region.

Third, unlike the North Korean economy, the Iranian economy is not in such a desperate condition that Iran will surrender its nuclear pretensions for a few billion dollars' worth of assistance. This means that other, more positive inducements must become part of the U.S.-Iranian dialogue—such as, perhaps, some reexamination of security alignments for our purposes or activities in the region, a prospect that might be difficult for many Sunni states that have grown quite comfortable with American hostility toward Iran.

And fourth, because the Iranian program is advancing, the Iranians win unless there is a specific action to excise their suspected nuclear weapons programs.

With each passing month, as the Iranian program progresses, we come closer to the U.S. military option.

What should the United States do to improve the chances of reaching a peaceful settlement that precludes Iran's nuclear capabilities? First, it should broaden its efforts at the decisive point in Baghdad and throughout Iraq by surging nonmilitary expertise from the Departments of State, Commerce, Justice, and Treasury into the country. Accompanied by a wholesale augmenta-

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tion of interpreters, this influx of expertise could accelerate the emergence of effective Iraqi institutions. This is the first and most long-standing requirement for a successful U.S. mission. Second, the United States should intensify its pressure on Nouri al-Maliki's government to deal with the militias and the Iranian relationships that are undercutting the effectiveness of both the Iraqi government and the United States in the region. Both these measures are necessary to avoid the repetitive failures that have plagued U.S. efforts in the past, and which in this case could leave the United States with no alternative but strikes on Iran.

Whether the surge succeeds or not—and especially if it doesn't—the United States needs other leverage points. It should immediately open an unconditional dialogue within the region, including dialogue with Iran and Syria. The focus of this conversation should be on providing a future vision for the region, taking into account national and sectarian insecurities and sensitivities, and acknowledging the de jure legitimacy of the existing regimes. While the Saudis and other interlocutors with the Iranians have been helpful, a more direct conversation will accelerate both the application of pressures and the development of the kinds of positive inducements—recognition, admittance to international organizations, resumption of economic relationships, and a regional security structure—that may be necessary for Iran to see the overwhelming advantages of giving up its nuclear weapons programs.

In essence, the policy issues come down to a debate over leverage—how much and what type of leverage is required for Iran to dismantle and bar the resumption of any nuclear weapons programs. The administration would argue that it currently lacks leverage, and so must continue to apply pressure and use indirect dialogue—that the Iranians are stubborn, only understand the use of force, can't be given the impression that they are winning, and so forth. The administration seems to consider "sticks" the only form of leverage. But the truth is that the Iranians have survived almost thirty years of isolation, hostility, and war. The U.S. intervention in Iraq probably altered permanently the sectarian balance of power in the region in Iran's favor. And whether our allies in the region appreciate Iran or not, its population of nearly 70 million people, enormous wealth of resources, and strong heritage make it a significant power. A policy of sticks alone is unlikely to persuade Iran to give up its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

The administration's dogged pursuit of leverage by sticks, unfortunately, is too much a holdover of the tough-guy, new-sheriff attitude that landed us in the Iraq mess. But another kind of leverage—carrots—*could* succeed. The United States is the largest economic power in the world, and has control, or very near controlling influence, over almost every international institution of significance to the Iranians. I believe we can gain far more from Iran by dispensing some carrots—and can also apply the sticks more effectively—if we are in face-to-face dialogue. Dangling some carrots now in an unconditional dialogue with Tehran while the surge in Baghdad is only beginning could prove decisive.

What can Congress do to help? First, push the administration to support Iraq with the nonmilitary resources that are essential to progress there. Congress should hold immediate hearings to investigate why the nonmilitary elements of the administration's strategy have failed so badly, and why the appropriate resources cannot be brought to bear. Second, add pressure on al-Maliki to convince him to take the tough measures required to settle the issues of oil revenues, federalism, and the militias. Congress should strengthen its efforts to investigate corruption inside the economic-development program, and demand stronger accounting for the Iraqi government's and leaders' relationships with Iran. And third, demand that the Bush administration commence an unconditional dialogue with the regional powers and each of Iraq's neighbors immediately. This is the next sense-of-the-Congress resolution that is required.

The Bush administration's dogged pursuit of leverage by "sticks" is too much of a holdover of the tough-guy, new-sheriff attitude that landed us in the Iraq mess.

For the United States, the possible use of force against Iran must remain on the table. But military conflict is not inevitable, and neither is Iranian nuclear weaponry. It is a matter of strategy and leadership. It's time for the United States to stop isolating those it disagrees with, pretending that other nations have more influence, asking others to carry the burden of dialogue, and leaving our soldiers in Iraq to struggle without an adequate diplomatic strategy to reinforce their efforts. The evidence of the administration's lack of diplomatic leadership is evident in the new agreement with North Korea, which could have been reached four years ago before the North Koreans acquired fuel for additional nuclear weapons. We cannot afford more delays with Iran while we pursue a misplaced strategy. Congress and the American people should demand that the administration step forward and lead. WM

General Wesley Clark, USA (Ret.), was supreme allied commander, Europe, from 1997 to 2000, and a candidate for the Democratic nomination for president in 2004.

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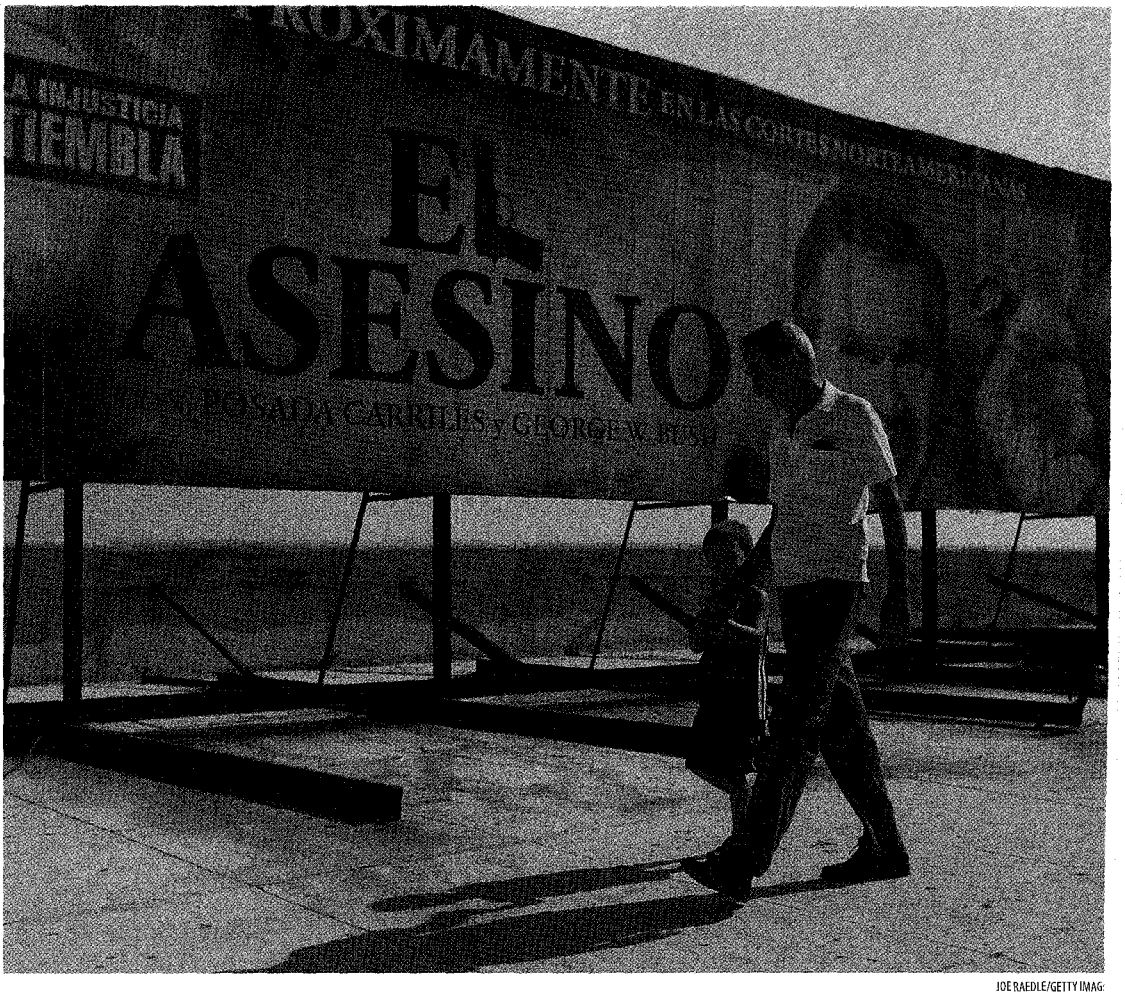

JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGE

Castr-ated

The Bush administration's aversion to dealing with Cuba is reducing our influence on the island—just when there's a chance to encourage change.

By Joshua Kurlantzick

The Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) sits on the side of a highway just outside Miami International Airport. OCB coordinates Radio and TV Marti, which are designed to offer accurate, objective news to ordinary Cubans, as an alternative to the relentless propaganda of the state-controlled media outlets. The office is supposed to be one of the key tools in the Bush administration's effort to lay the groundwork for a democratic Cuba. But in its corruption and mismanagement, it has come to resemble the Coalition Provisional Authority that helped doom our efforts in Iraq.

OCB's director, Pedro Roig—a veteran of the Bay of Pigs invasion, and a prominent member of the local Cuban community—had no media experience when he took the job in 2003. According to newspaper reports, Roig has hired his wife's nephew as his chief of staff, and has hired a friend who's a convicted felon for another position. And in February, Jose Miranda, a former program director at TV Marti, pled guilty to accepting more than $100,000 in bribes from a vendor doing business with the channel.

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The problems didn't start with Roig's tenure. A 2003 internal inspector general's report slammed the office's leaders for failing to follow standard contracting procedures, employing inappropriate hiring practices, and overpaying contractors. The report also found that OCB "lacked programming quality control structures," noting that the office's director at the time, Salvador Lew, had dismissed the internal committee designed to review new programs.

Nor is OCB required to show that Cubans are actually watching or listening—and it appears that few are. The Castro government blocks TV Marti, and much of the programming is glaringly unsophisticated: crude caricatures of the Havana leadership, for instance, or rambling monologues by Miami exiles. (The inspector general found that "OCB was not using research or internal review mechanisms to guide its programming decisions.") One independent study found that only 9,000 Cubans—or .08 percent of the total population—tune in to the channels.

OCB has never been a model of efficiency, but at least during the 1990s it operated with some federal oversight. A high-level presidential advisory board convened regularly throughout the Clinton years. But according to the inspector general's report, the board has not met since Bush took office. And the *Chicago Tribune* recently reported that one person listed as a current member, Charles Tyroler, actually died in 1995.

Under Bush, OCB has developed into an assembly line of pork that rewards the most virulently anti-Castro activists, and helps keep Miami's Cubans in the president's camp, while doing little to increase U.S. influence in Cuba. "It's a political patronage organization," says one Cuban American leader. "People [in Miami] won't attack Cuba policy because they are on the government dole."

Still, none of these glaring problems have prevented OCB's growth since Bush became president. In 2006, the administration and the GOP-led Congress poured some $37 million into the office, a $10 million increase from the previous year. (The new Democratic Congress recently announced its intention to hold hearings investigating mismanagement and corruption at OCB.)

The office's ineffectiveness is symptomatic of the broader failure of the Bush administration's Cuba policy. Since 2001, the United States has applied its ideological obsession with confrontation to the government in Havana, discarding the Clinton administration's approach of cautious engagement and returning instead to a "regime change" policy championed by Florida's hardest-line anti-Castro Cuban Americans. Even worse, despite the stirring rhetoric, the policy has often appeared more focused on maintaining Cuban American political support in Florida than on bringing genuine change to Cuba. "All this talk about getting tougher on Cuba, but then all the money spent is just political pork in Miami," says the same Cuban American leader.

In other words, the Bush approach has been determined by a mixture of neoconservative doctrine and the cold calculations of domestic politics. The result has been an ineffective policy that has reduced America's ability to influence events on an island just ninety miles off the coast of Florida—and at the crucial moment when a weakening Fidel is attempting to hand off power to his brother Raul. That loss of influence has damaged American interests in Cuba—perhaps compromising national security—and has undercut the United States' ability to help the Cuban people create a more open, democratic country. Says the Cuban American leader: "The chance for helping real change is quickly disappearing."

GENTLY DOES IT

Since the failure of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion—in which the Kennedy administration tried to overthrow Castro's government by arming an invasion force of Cuban exiles—U.S.-Cuba relations have largely been characterized by American trade sanctions and an intense mutual distrust. But when the Soviet Union broke up, leaving Cuba isolated, Fidel Castro was forced to change course. He opened up the economy by allowing limited private enterprise, and began to adopt a somewhat less confrontational stance toward the West.

At the same time, Washington responded to the end of the cold war by actively rebuilding ties with communist nations, like Vietnam, that had human rights records as poor as Cuba's. And many in the Clinton administration argued that taking the same approach with Cuba—by encouraging foreign travel, economic assistance, and a broader relationship with the United States—would increase the flow of ideas into and out of Cuba, and would strengthen democratic activists on the island.

As a result, during the 1990s, Washington and Havana began a cautious process of rapprochement. The Clinton administration stepped up agricultural trade with Cuba, helping to open the Cuban economy while simultaneously pleasing American farmers. Though limited by congressional restrictions, the White House also loosened bans on cash remittances and travel to Cuba, and began to allow direct flights to the island, in an effort to increase the spread of information to average Cubans. It also initiated cooperation with Havana on bilateral issues like migration and drug trafficking.

As the decade wore on, a rough consensus emerged in favor of this policy, and of still more engagement, even among some conservatives. Daniel Fisk, now the senior director for Western Hemisphere affairs on the National Security Council, was a Cuba expert at the conservative Heritage Foundation during the Clinton administration. In a 2001 essay in the *Washington Quarterly*, he argued for even greater open-

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ness, urging the administration to allow increased American investment in, and travel to, Cuba. As CEO of Halliburton during that same time, Dick Cheney supported USA*Engage, a lobbying group funded by multinational corporations advocating the removal of sanctions on Cuba and other countries. And even in the Cuban American community—usually depicted as monolithically opposed to any suggestion of engagement or compromise with Castro's regime—the policy enjoyed significant support.

This strategy also showed signs of paying off in Cuba itself. The more moderate U.S. policy made it harder for Castro's government to paint internal dissident movements as stooges of the West. As a result, groups like the Varela Project, which used petition-gathering campaigns to push for political reforms, eventually grew in prominence and visibility. Meanwhile, Cuba responded to the U.S. overture by carrying out some limited internal reforms, including further economic liberalization, greater freedom for writers and intellectuals, and slightly looser rules on travel. Washington and Havana even hammered out an agreement on Cuban refugees.

Says a former U.S. diplomat in Cuba: "In Iraq at least we waited to invade the country before appointing a transition coordinator."

REVERSING COURSE

Then came the 2000 election, in which Florida's Cuban American population played a key role in muscling Bush into office. Cubans gave Bush 82 percent of their votes—around 250,000 more votes than they gave Al Gore—in an election ultimately decided by 537 votes. "The Republicans knew they won Florida because of Cubans," says the Cuban American leader.

It wasn't just any Cubans, though. Bush received significant financial support from older, more conservative anti-Castro activists—many of whom fled the island as children or young adults after Castro came to power and still hope one day to return.

And the presence of these activists at street demonstrations during the postelection battle—in response to appeals from local Cuban American GOP members of Congress—was crucial in halting the recounts the Bush campaign feared.

As a result, once in office, the new president found himself deeply indebted to the most extreme anti-Castro elements of Miami's Cuban community. And as his administration developed a Cuba policy, those hard-liners got their reward. Soon after taking office, Bush began to reverse the Clinton administration's course. Pressured by the Cuban GOP representatives to whom he in part owed his presidency—members like Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Mario Diaz-Balart, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and vehement anti-Castro activists—the White House set about changing many of the Clinton policies designed to cautiously engage the Castro regime.

It also created the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, which it touted as an advisory body intended to provide an objective assessment of Cuba policy. In fact, though, the commission was comprised primarily of Bush cabinet officials and consulted few outside experts or Cuban American groups that did not already support a hard-line policy. "They went to one place, and they talked amongst themselves," says Philip Peters, a Cuba expert at the Lexington Institute, a conservative think tank. "They explicitly only discussed it in Congress with Ros-Lehtinen and Diaz-Balart or others like them."

According to Mark Falcoff, a Cuba expert at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, when it came time to discuss policy options, participants only chose from a range of ways to increase pressure on Fidel; continuing moderate engagement was not on the table. Another Cuba specialist who interacted with the commission (and requested anonymity in speaking to the *Washington Monthly* because the commission's proceedings were not intended to be made public) says it was not interested in examining the difficult aspects of change in Cuba, like potential unrest and the chance of a post-Fidel government not immediately becoming democratic. Yet studies by the Cuba Transition Project at the University of Miami and many other experts had warned of just these dangers. "They are just picturing there would be a great future government in Cuba," the Cuba specialist says. (This was hardly the only example, one might note, of the Bush White House simply assuming that regime change in a foreign dictatorship would necessarily lead to a stable liberal democracy.)

Given how the administration gamed the commission, the report it produced was predictable. The commission recommended tightening regulations on family visits to Cuba and generally cracking down on travel. It also drew up plans to essentially manage the post-Fidel transition from Washington. The United States, it proposed, could help oversee the transformation of Cuba's political system, the privatization of Cuban industries, the possible transfer of property to returning exiles, and even the management of Cuban programs like national retirement funds and traffic-safety initiatives.

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Bush quickly implemented the commission's suggestions, upping the budget for programs to broadcast anti-Castro messages into Cuba, cracking down on companies trading with the country, slashing the amount of money Cuban Americans could send back to their families, and reducing their visits to Cuba to only once every three years—even if they had sick relatives. Bush appointed a "transition coordinator," Caleb McCarry, a former Hill aide and longtime democracy advocate, who became a kind of proconsul in waiting, working out of the State Department. McCarry was put in charge of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba and was empowered to help determine the direction of U.S. efforts to hasten a democratic transition in Cuba.

In an interview, McCarry says that tough Bush administration policies, like restrictions on travel and remittances, were designed to isolate and weaken the Castro regime. He argues that the administration understands that it cannot impose a direction on Cuba's future, but that it can use tools like financial aid and broadcast media to support reformers. But his very appointment has been viewed with trepidation by many Cuban dissidents, who worry that the United States' establishment of a transition coordinator has been perceived by ordinary Cubans as unwelcome foreign meddling. "Caleb McCarry's position is an absurd one," says Wayne Smith, a former U.S. diplomat in Cuba. "In Iraq at least we waited to invade the country before appointing a transition coordinator."

But an ideological tilt toward confrontation has been only part of the problem. The White House has also appeared to view Cuba policy as a means of rewarding its political supporters, and it has given those supporters a virtual free hand to run many of the programs as they see fit. In addition to the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, the administration distributes much of its pro-democracy programming through USAID, an operation that makes Radio and TV Marti look like well-oiled machines.

The USAID funding supports an industry of Cuban American contractors in Miami. Even by the standards of the aid agency, which often takes a hands-off approach to overseeing its contractors, the Cuban programs operate with strikingly little accountability. According to a devastating Government Accountability Office report released in November, USAID handed out 95 percent of its contracts without competitive bidding, and kept little documentation of what its grantees did with the money. Little wonder, then, that, according to the GAO report, some recipients of USAID money in Miami mixed it with their personal accounts, or spent the funds on items that likely will do little to help topple the Castros—like cashmere sweaters, Sony Playstations, and imported chocolates.

Despite this mismanagement, the Bush administration has made the USAID programming a central part of its effort to bring democracy to Cuba. In 2006, it poured over $7 million into USAID programming on democracy and governance in Cuba—a significant increase from the Clinton years. And it recently vowed to increase USAID funding again. "You see no attempt, not one word, to take a critical look at the program," says Peter Orr, a former senior USAID official. It's not hard to understand why. By funneling money to the contractors, the organization has helped to ensure the support of the Cuban American community, and to discourage activist groups from questioning the administration policy. "No one will say anything, because Cuban groups are getting paid by USAID," says the Cuban American leader.

The revolution will not be televised: TV Marti's crude satires are doing little to topple the Castros. Here, an actor playing Raul Castro, left, prepares for the taping of a show called *The Office of the Chief.*

LOSING GROUND

On the island itself, where all this new pressure was supposed to lead to greater openness and increased American influence, the Bush policies have had exactly the opposite result. The embargo still has little impact on Cuba's economy, which, supported by cheap oil from Venezuela and aid from China, grew by around 8 percent in 2005,

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the latest figures available. Meanwhile, the White House's focus on regime change has worried many Cubans, who fear the kind of chaos and violence that has occurred in Iraq, and the possibility of Cuban exiles returning to the island to reclaim their property. The commission report "increased fear of change," says Peters of the Lexington Institute. "And it was rejected even by Cubans who want change ... because it explicitly threatened people's homes and health care and education."

The Bush policy also strengthened hard-liners in the Havana regime, who can use the White House's statements, and the history of U.S. intervention in Cuba, as motivation for keeping Cuba closed and xenophobic. In recent years, Castro's government has increased roundups of democracy activists, prompting the Cuban journalist Miriam Leiva to note in *Salon* in 2004 that "American support for the dissidents, however well intentioned, helped land them in jail."

In addition, many dissidents have begun to shy away from associating with the United States, and some have publicly voiced their frustration with American efforts. Elizardo Sanchez, who leads the Cuban Commission of Human Rights and National Reconciliation—the country's most prominent human rights monitoring group—told the *Chicago Tribune* last summer, "This [U.S. policy] is putting gasoline on the fire. This is fuel for the Cuban government's propaganda." And even Owaldo Paya, leader of the Varela Project, has publicly warned—referring to the reports put out by the White House's Committee for Assistance to a Free Cuba—"We do not accept transition programs made outside of Cuba."

ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Big brothers: Reps. Mario, left, and Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.) have helped turn Cuba policy over to the hard-liners.

Most important, as Fidel nears his final hour, the Bush administration's failed policy has only made it easier for him to hand over power to his younger brother. Since Fidel fell ill last summer—U.S. officials suggest he suffers from terminal cancer, though Castro's Spanish doctor has denied this, saying he has a serious gastric condition—Raul has consolidated his hold on Havana, making high-profile visits to Cuban military bases and giving public speeches on the future of Cuban politics. Even though many Cuba experts, like former CIA officer Brian Latell, had warned that Raul would probably face little initial opposition within the country, his takeover has seemed to surprise U.S. officials. "The U.S. prepared for the least likely scenario, a democratic revolution, and didn't prepare for the most likely, a gradual handover," says Daniel Erikson of the Inter-American Dialogue, Washington's leading Latin America think tank.

Recently, though, there have been some signs of a more nuanced approach from the White House. This summer, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas Shannon, considered a moderate career diplomat, announced that the United States should have "patience" as it waits for reform in Cuba, and suggested lifting U.S. sanctions if Havana institutes political reforms—a shift that appeared to recognize the fact that the earlier hard-line approach had only alienated Cubans. U.S. diplomats in Cuba—where America, in lieu of a proper embassy, has an Interests Section in the Swiss embassy—have also recently tried to rebuild relations with dissidents. And in August, Bush himself declared that Cubans on the island would decide their future government, a departure from the idea of a U.S.-supported transition—and a position seconded by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

But administration hard-liners, backed by the Cuban American GOP members of Congress, are still helping to dictate policy. As a result, in recent months, the White House has failed to exploit an unprecedented opportunity to improve ties with the island. Though Raul has a history of brutality, he appears to be more of a pragmatist than his brother, and some Cuba specialists believe he's been trying to offer an olive branch to Washington. In a speech in early December celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Cuban revolution, Raul declared, "We are willing to resolve at the negotiating table the long-standing dispute between the United States and Cuba." "Raul reached out," says Marifeli Perez-Stable of the Inter-American Dialogue. "It behooves the U.S. to explore this." Raul also has hinted he may pursue economic liberalization; in the 1990s, he traveled to China to study

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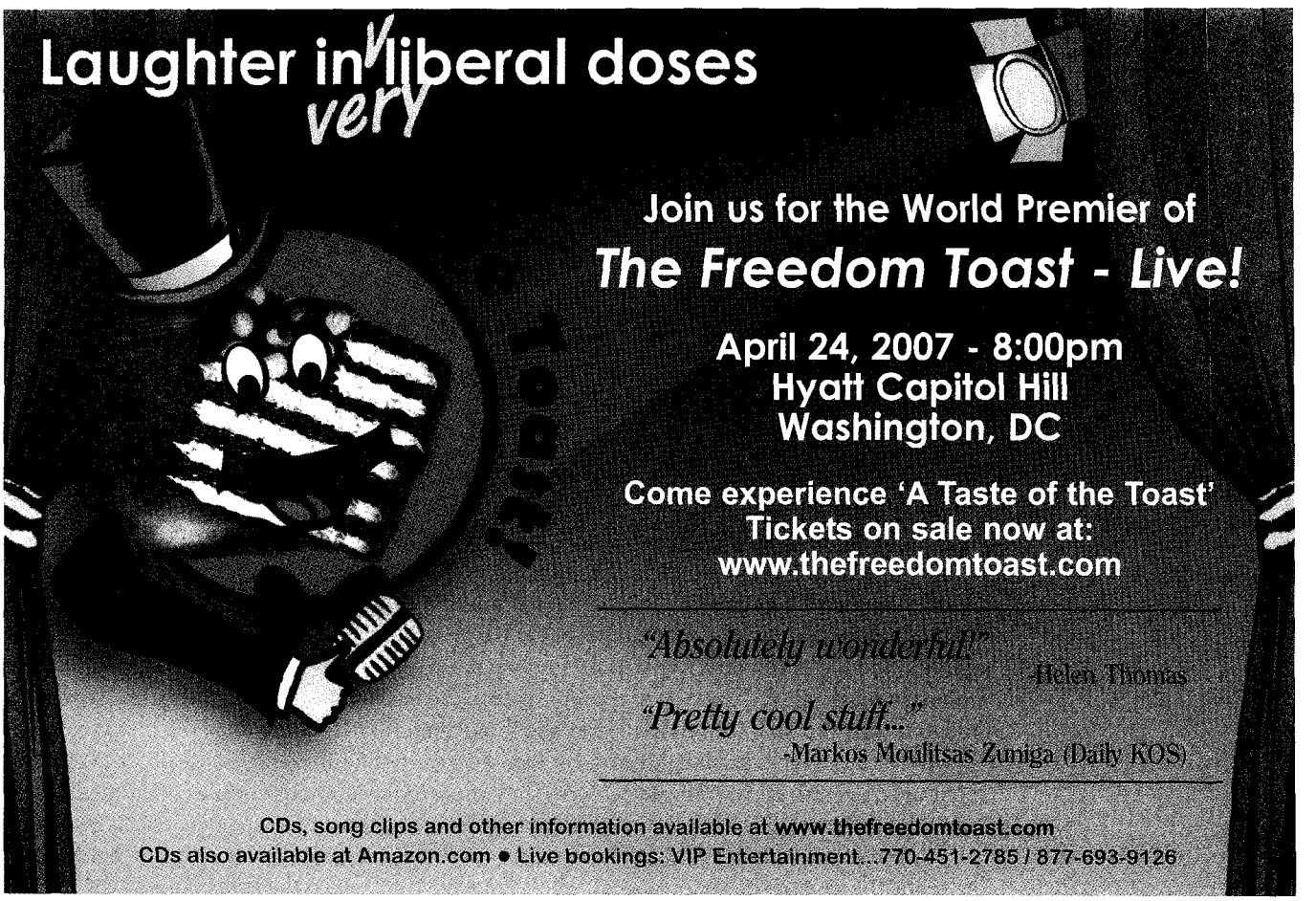
Beijing's reforms, and praised the idea of market economics. But Washington has not seized the chance to engage Raul; the White House barely responded to his December speech.

The failure to engage Raul could damage U.S. interests. As America remains on the outside, its rivals for influence in Cuba have made inroads. Under Hugo Chávez, Venezuela has become Cuba's major patron, and a reliable source of aid. And China, which has long cultivated relations with Raul, is now Cuba's second-largest trading partner, which could give Beijing access to Cuba's potential oil and gas reserves, and influence over the future direction of Cuba's political system. The failure of the White House's Cuba policy could also compromise U.S. security. According to University of Miami professor June Teufel Dreyer, testifying before a House committee, China recently set up an eavesdropping facility at a site south of Havana, with the goal of tracking U.S. phone and computer communications.

Even more disturbing, America's lack of political influence in Cuba could leave it powerless to prevent a poorly managed post-Fidel transition. Despite the seeming ease with which Raul is taking the reins, the prospect of instability upon Castro's death is not outlandish, and the Bush administration's failed policy has reduced our ability to ensure things go smoothly. That could mean trouble. In the event of a violent political struggle or economic meltdown in Cuba, we'd be left with no good options. In 1994, chaos in Haiti—a less populous country than Cuba, and one that's geographically and culturally further from the United States—eventually forced a reluctant President Clinton to intervene. But today, thanks to its outsize footprint, the United States is already feared and hated around the world. Even a well-intentioned Cuban intervention would hardly improve America's global image. Conversely, if the U.S. stayed out, the chaos might well lead to a refugee crisis that could overburden or destabilize parts of south Florida, with potentially catastrophic results. (Last December, top administration officials, including Rice and National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley, met to consider this very possibility, and to review policy in case of a mass exodus.) For the Bush administration, which has always approached Cuba policy with an eye as much on Miami as Havana, such a disaster would represent the ultimate grim irony.WM

Joshua Kurlantzick is special correspondent for the *New Republic*. His new book, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World*, will be out in April.



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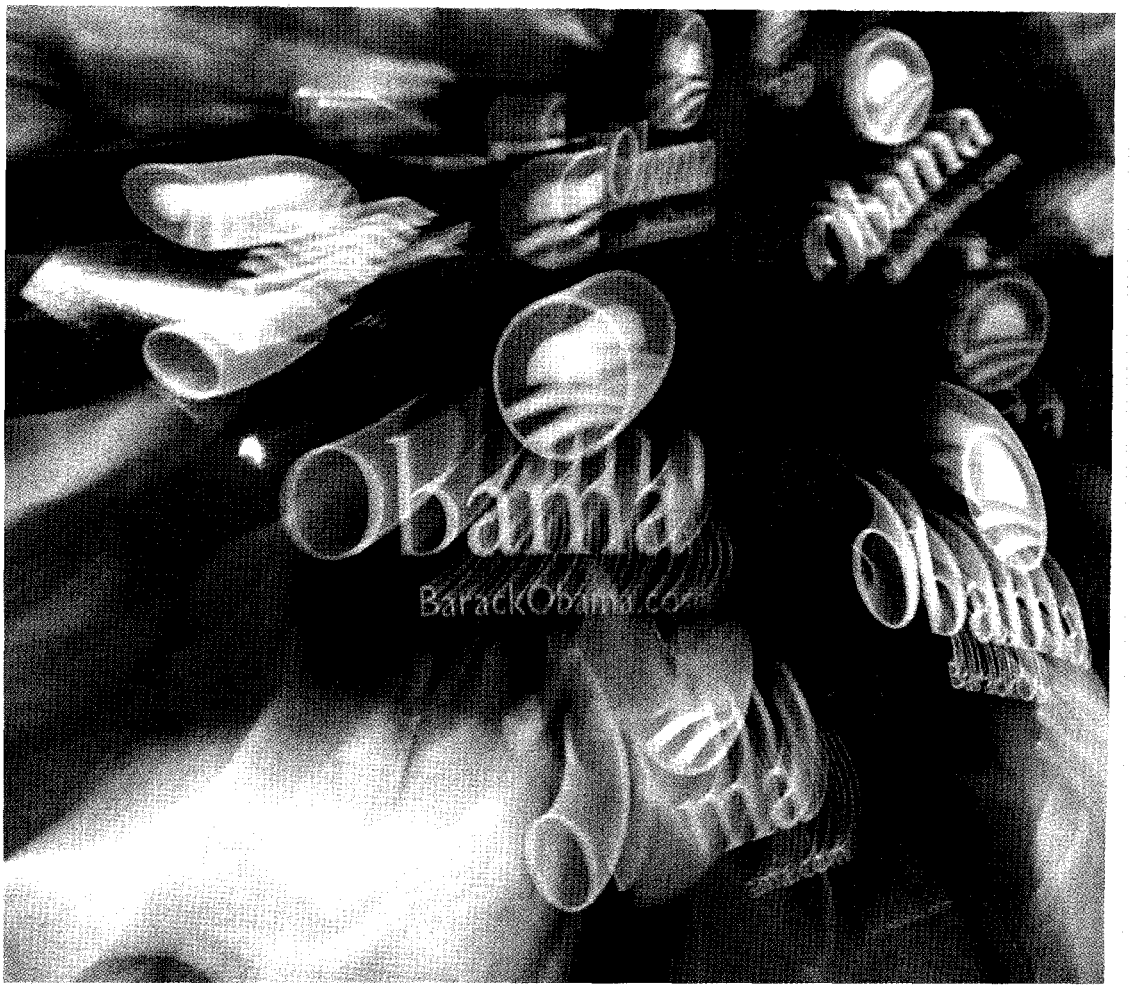

JEFF HAYNES/AFP/GETTY IM

No Time to Go Wobbly, Barack

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM *ISN'T* BROKEN, AND YOU CAN LEAD IT.

By Michael Hirsh

Samantha Power is a tall, rangy redhead with the purposeful gait of the athlete she once wanted to be. She has a husky voice and often speaks in excited rushes of ideas, the words tumbling over each other. What animates Power more than anything else is her Cause, her "dream of American power being harnessed for good." She was haunted by her experience during the Bosnia war in the early 1990s, when, stringing for the *Washington Post*, she reported on the Serb attack on Srebrenica before the massacre of Bosnian Muslims there, but failed to get a story in the paper. Later she discovered, to her shock, that the tepid and slow response to the Balkans slaughter was in fact our best humanitarian effort ever, "the most robust of the century." The United States—the avatar of freedom, the beacon of human rights, the city upon the hill—"had never in its history intervened to stop genocide," she later wrote.

A sometime journalist, wonk, and professor of government at Harvard University, Power spent the rest of the 1990s propounding the idea that, under the leadership of the United

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States, the international system would soon advance to the point at which it would no longer tolerate atrocious human rights abuses, especially genocide. Her 600-page book on the subject, *"A Problem From Hell,"* was turned down by nearly every major publisher. But after it won a Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction in 2003, Power became a celebrity, at least within that intellectual demimonde of policy makers, academics, and think-tankers stretching from Washington to Harvard Square, and points beyond.

Power's Pulitzer was awarded in April 2003, just as the looting began to rage in the streets of Baghdad, providing the first glimpses of the nightmare that Iraq was to become. And as the months passed, Power watched her interventionist dreams turn to dust. In just a few years, she believed, President Bush had squandered the efforts of half a century, in which Washington carefully nurtured an international system and worked its way, fitfully, toward a vague doctrine of global leadership. While Bush talks of freedom, democracy, and human rights, most people see a savage, botched occupation, alignment with Arab autocrats against Iran, and waterboarding in secret prisons. Says Power: "Now we're neither the shining example, nor even competent meddlers. It's going to take a generation or so to reclaim American exceptionalism."

As she watched the 2004 presidential election returns come in, Power found herself sunk in "despondency" over the prospect of another four years of the same. Almost as disheartening as Bush's win was the fact that the Kerry campaign had shied away from forthrightly challenging him on the fundamentals of his "war on terror." For Power, as for so many, the one spark of hope was Barack Obama, whose ringing keynote speech had electrified the Democratic convention. Power was so impressed that she downloaded the speech onto her iPod. "I said, 'God, what does one do now?'" Power recalls. "I guess it's one of three things. One can just accept that all this will continue, one can run for office, or one can become Barack Obama's foreign policy adviser." A friend knew Obama's college roommate. "So I got a short e-mail in early '05: 'Barack likes your book and would like to meet with you.'"

Their first meeting, several months later at a D.C. steakhouse, did not begin auspiciously. "His body language was not good," says Power. "He had no desire to be there at all. It was, 'Who the fuck is this person, this lily-livered Harvard softy, and tell me why I am meeting with her again?'" Still, Obama warmed up—it was supposed to be a forty-five-minute chat, but they ended up talking for three hours. "We sat down, and we started dinner. I was on my best behavior: I didn't, like, order my trademark Jack Daniels. And then we just started talking. It was vintage Obama: question after question after question, starting with, 'Who are you? I don't get it. Bosnia? Whaaa? That's weird.' It ended up being a very personal discussion, oddly enough, but everything led to policy. That's the way he comes to policy: What's your story, and why do you tick the way you do? ... He's what everybody says he is." Before long, Power says, she had "drunk the Kool-Aid" on Obama. "At the end of the dinner, we're walking out, and I said, 'I'd love to help you in any way I can.' He said, 'That'd be great, maybe we could do some big think on a smart, tough, and humane foreign policy.' I heard myself saying, 'Why don't I take a year off?'"

It wasn't as if Power didn't have other ways to spend her time. But for her, Obama represented nothing less than a chance to achieve her dream—to allow America to act as a force for good in the world—by rethinking the entire international security structure from the ground up. The Bush administration's lethal mixture of arrogance and incompetence, she believed, had so squandered American credibility and alienated potential allies that the old system, based on a combination of American military dominance and deference to multilateral decision-making bodies, was no longer viable. With Obama, she might begin to figure out a new one.

Of course, Power is too smart and nuanced a thinker not to recognize what was valuable about the old system. "Obama and I talked a lot about the phenomenon of throwing the baby out with the bathwater," she says. Power is finishing up a second book on a martyr to the dying dream of internationalism—Sergio Vieira de Mello, the rising United Nations star whose death by bombing in Iraq in August 2003 spelled another early disaster for the U.S. occupation. She says that one of the objects of her book is to "rescue the institutional memory" of successful international intervention efforts over the last twenty-five years of de Mello's extraordinary career. "But we're so despised around the world that when we show up at international institutions we're not listened to, even when we now bring good-faith arguments, like on intervening in Darfur," she says. "Whoever takes over in 2009 is inheriting this degree of contempt in the world. And that same person is going to be making a case for a wholly different approach to diplomacy and international institutions."

Anthony Lake reached a similar conclusion from a very different place, and a different generation. In many ways, Lake is Power's opposite: soft-spoken where she is impassioned, and so bland he seems to disappear into the woodwork. Lake went to Vietnam as a young Foreign Service official, and he describes himself as very like Alden Pyle, the dangerously idealistic protagonist of Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American*, set in Vietnam during the 1950s. He was, in other words, a young proto-interventionist before the thirty-six-year-old Power was a gleam in her Irish mother's eye. It was Lake who, as President Clinton's national security adviser, conceived the closest thing the Clinton administration ever came up with to a post–cold war doctrine, declaring in a 1993 speech, "The successor to a doctrine of con-

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tainment must be a strategy of enlargement—enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies."

Lake first heard of Obama in 2002, when the former Clintonite was in Chicago giving a speech. "Afterwards one of the people there said there was a young guy running for the Senate. He probably had no chance, but could I talk to him?" Like Power, Lake was simply bowled over. "You can't quote this, because it would sound like I'm gushing," he told me, before proceeding to gush over Obama's abilities (and later giving me permission to quote him). Most of all, however, he sees Obama's "new face" as a way of moving to a more "fundamental" reordering of the global system. The UN-dominated structure that rose after World War II is "something we can live without," he says. "We need to rethink the premises."

It may be that what is most broken today is not the international system, but American stewardship of it.

There's no doubt that Obama has the intellectual curiosity and self-confidence—not to mention the ideal public persona—to fundamentally reconsider American foreign policy. But at this point, for all his promise, he's still, in some sense, a cipher. After eight years in the Illinois Senate and two in Washington, his foreign policy thinking, unsurprisingly, remains largely unformed. That Power and Lake—both hard-bitten political veterans, not starstruck newcomers—each found themselves gravitating toward Obama on the basis of a speech, a dinner, or a phone call suggests the level of despair to which both had sunk. Bush, it appeared, had so destroyed what was left of the existing system of international security that both Power and Lake, through their separate journeys, had reached a point where they sought a leader who might offer not a return to that system—as John Kerry cautiously did in 2004—but a wholesale reimagining of it.

In this impulse, they are far from alone. The last year has seen a slew of efforts by foreign policy thinkers, academics, journalists, policy wonks, and politicians to envision a new international security system, and a new U.S. foreign policy to go along with it. These varied proposals often have little in common except the assumption that, through some combination of the end of the cold war, the new threat of stateless terror, and the failures of the Bush years, the old system is dead, and an entirely new one must now be created. Intellectually, like the Khmer Rouge, we're back at the year zero.

And yet, by assuming the need to go back to basics, many of these efforts, though not stinting in their condemnation of Bush's unilateralism, unwittingly accept the underlying premise of his foreign policy. That premise, during the first term, was that the postwar system of international relations—a system that, since 1945, has helped give the world unprecedented peace and prosperity—was no longer an effective tool for dealing with the world of the twenty-first century, in particular the post-9/11 world. But what if that premise was just plain wrong? If so, then perhaps the international system, though already weakened when Bush took office, appears to be beyond salvation now not because of its own fundamental flaws, but because of the serious damage done to it by the unprecedented radicalism of Bush's foreign policy.

In other words, it may be that what is most broken today is not the international system, but American stewardship of it. And that, at this pivotal moment for the nation and its place in the world, what's needed is not an entirely new vision but, rather, something simpler: a bit of faith. Faith that with time, committed diplomacy, and—perhaps most important—some basic good judgment about the use of American force, the essential framework of international relations that got us through the cold war—and that almost any president other than Bush would also have applied to the war on terror—can be repaired.

IF IT AIN'T BROKE

Over the last year, normally stolid members of the foreign policy establishment have been seized by something close to intellectual panic. These thinkers, profoundly shaken by the depths to which U.S. prestige has sunk under Bush, have experienced their own version of Power and Lake's impulsive flights to Obama. They've been falling all over themselves to propose sweeping new (and some not so new) foreign policy visions. Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School—headed by the energetic and talented Anne-Marie Slaughter, who could end up as the next female secretary of state—recently canvassed foreign policy experts and officials around the world, and concluded in a report that the United Nations is "in crisis." "The system of international institutions that the United States and its allies built after World War II and steadily expanded over the course of the Cold War is broken," wrote Slaughter and company. They proposed, among other replacements, a new "Concert of Democracies" that would "strengthen security cooperation among the world's liberal democracies."

Slaughter's so-called Princeton Project is hardly alone in seeking to start from scratch, and the effort is not confined to liberals. In a new book, *Ethical Realism*, internationalist Anatol Lieven and conservative John Hulsman join

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forces to declare that "the situation facing America today resembles that at the beginning of the Cold War, and demands a similar revolutionary shift in structures and priorities."

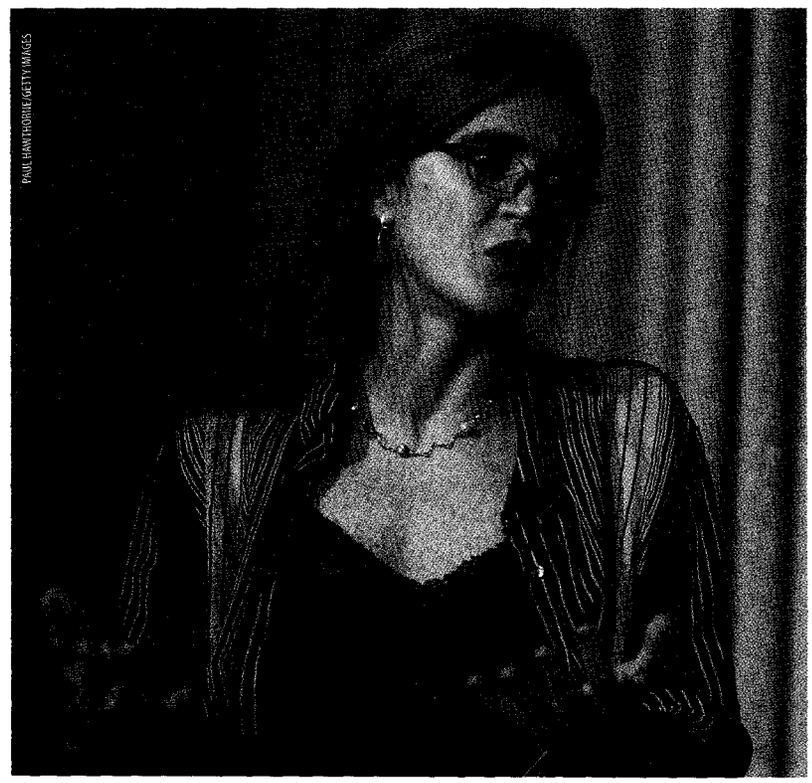
And in a February 2006 article in the *New York Times Magazine* called "After Neoconservatism," neocon defector Francis Fukuyama acknowledged that what was distinctive about that school of thought—the push for regime change and preemptive war—had been irrevocably discredited. But then he echoed the Princeton Project authors Lieven and Hulsman in his prescription: "The world today lacks effective international institutions that can confer legitimacy on collective action; creating new organizations that will better balance the dual requirements of legitimacy and effectiveness will be the primary task for the coming generation." In response he proposed what he described as a fresh idea: "realistic Wilsonianism." In so doing, Fukuyama came full circle: FDR and every subsequent president, including Reagan—Fukuyama's favorite—pursued exactly that policy, creating the conditions for what Fukuyama himself declared back in 1989 to be a world close to the "end of history" of ideas, with democratic capitalism triumphant.

Robert Wright also seems to be starting over intellectually. The author of one of the most brilliant and underappreciated books of the post-cold war era—*NonZero: The Logic of Human Destiny*, which in 2000 made a powerful case that global society has inevitably advanced to ever greater levels of interconnectedness—Wright proposed in a recent *New York Times* op-ed a "new" paradigm he billed as "progressive realism." The debate in Washington, he suggested, had been reduced to a bitter fight between those who advocated "chillingly clinical self-interest" (the realists) and those who still supported "dangerously naive altruism" (the idealists). Why not—*mirabile dictu*—bring the two sides together?

No one has gone further back to square one than *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof, who argued that since Americans are simply inept, we might as well just call the whole thing off. "Why are we so awful at foreign policy?" Kristof asked, as if the United Nations, the Marshall Plan, NATO, the World Trade Organization, and the World Bank—all American projects—had never existed. He even invoked the realist urtext, the Melian dialogue in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, in which the Athenians assert that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." Human history, in other words, is just an endless river strewn with the debris of mankind's stupidity.

These efforts to rebuild American foreign policy from the ground up—or just to abandon the whole endeavor—occupy a broad ideological terrain. Some are unabashedly hawkish, some "realist," some more isolationist, and some, like Kristof's, just despairing. Like Fukuyama and Wright, many of these thinkers are trying to find "new" ways of combining "realism" with "idealism." But they all go wrong to some degree because they proceed from the same questionable premise: that the international system that has existed since the end of the Second World War—one based on a tempered mixture of realism and idealism—is dysfunctional, or even obsolete.

It's true that the system could use some serious fixing up. But are we to imagine that our leaders have learned nothing worthwhile about how to govern international affairs in the nearly 2,500 years since the Peloponnesian War? In truth, American presidents have been merging idealism and realism in practice—some deftly, some not—at least since Woodrow Wilson. Cast your mind back six years, to the relatively quiet end of the Clinton administration. America presided over a flawed but remarkably functioning global community, one that we ourselves had had the biggest hand in creating. The founding of the UN in 1945, with its Security Council designed around Roosevelt's Four Policemen concept—the United States, Russia, Britain, and China each overseeing stability in their regions—was itself a major attempt to combine idealist international law with realist armed might. And it was created as a conscious effort to fix Woodrow Wilson's mistakes with the League of Nations. Progress! And after a shaky start, Clinton used that system deftly to stop a civil war in Bosnia, end ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, and usher China into the WTO.


PAUL HANTHORNE/GETTY IMAGES

Smitten: Foreign policy expert Samantha Power was despondent about America's place in the world—until she met Barack Obama.

The UN has rarely worked as it was designed, but neither is it irreparably broken; indeed, one ironic outcome of

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President Bush, DHS Secretary Chertoff, Attorney General Gonzales

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Bush's unilateralist overreaching in his first term was that he was forced to resort to the UN Security Council in his second term more than most presidents had ever had to. Even this most distrusted of presidents managed to muster a slew of important UN resolutions that have been critical to addressing, or at least containing, crises from Lebanon to Iran to North Korea. The Security Council is still the main source of international legitimacy for intervention of any kind, and despite repeated failures at reforming its musty, World War II–era structure, every nation still wants to get on it.

Compared to previous periods of imperial rule, this international system was—and still is—unmatched by any other in history in the depth and breadth of its reach. As James Richardson, an Australian scholar of international relations, has pointed out, the global economic order policed by institutions like the World Trade Organization is "without historical precedent; earlier attempts to establish international order relied mainly on political and military means." The overall prosperity provided by this worldwide system has created, despite the inequities of globalization, a powerful and enduring motivation for nations to become part of it. In order to gain power and influence, countries must prosper; in order to prosper, they must join the international economy. Everyone inside the system gets richer and stronger, while everyone outside it grows relatively weaker and poorer—one reason why the Bush administration's campaign to cut off bank financing to Iran and North Korea has been its single most successful pressure tactic, surprising even Washington. The system is still secured by American power, which is the global control rod that stifles belligerent states and arms races from East Asia to Latin America, making globalization possible in the first place—and allowing other governments to spend little on defense.

Every president until Bush understood the absolute imperative of preserving this system in facing any challenge. In 1953, Eisenhower took office after a campaign in which hardliners had pressed to replace Truman's containment strategy toward the Soviet Union with one of unilateralist "rollback." The new president convened the top-secret "Project Solarium" (named after the room where Ike decided on the approach) to hammer the issue out—and opted for containment. Eisenhower, remembering his days as supreme allied commander during World War II, was acutely mindful of the need to maintain a broad-based alliance against the Soviets, says his granddaughter, Susan Eisenhower. Even in 1962, during that most "realist" of foreign policy tests, the Cuban missile crisis, John F. Kennedy still sought the moral or Wilsonian high ground by worrying what the reaction in the UN and the international community might be if he launched a preemptive strike on Cuba. (Adlai Stevenson's characterization of the Security Council as "the court of world opinion" during his famous confrontation with the Soviet delegate in 1962 remains the best definition of that body yet.) George H. W. Bush, in strategizing over the Gulf War, spent long hours with top aides like National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft worrying about winning support at the United Nations. And even after the cold war, Clinton frequently fretted over winning consensus in NATO.

The president took far too long to look beneath his feet and see that he was standing on the shoulders of giants, the American leaders and their allies who built the postwar system.

A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

The international system that nudged every postwar president toward moderation and multilateralism (whenever possible) continues to function today, if imperfectly. What failed, at least in Bush's first term, was American government, on whose steady leadership that system depends. Indeed, the most important thing to understand about the Bush years was that his foreign policy was not just a matter of runaway unilateralism and arrogance in response to 9/11. Senior officials of the Bush administration actually had a proactive agenda to upend the international system, to roll back what they saw as ninety years of runamuck Wilsonianism, and to unleash pent-up conservative and nativist impulses they believed had been held in check for too long by the cold war consensus.

That was why Bush and his senior advisers were so ready to repudiate NATO, the UN, and even the Geneva Conventions in his first term. A great deal of what Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and their minions did was payback, not just to Clinton but to FDR and Woodrow Wilson (though in W's case when he thought of Wilson he may have seen his own father's face). No Bush official embodied this agenda of demolishing liberal internationalism better than John Bolton. Here, a man whose writings and speeches had embraced a policy of delegitimizing the UN and international law was made steward of those very institutions. (And that was in the second term.)

The presence of this other agenda is why so much of what the Bush team did seemed to have so little to do with

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9/11 and the direct challenge of al-Qaeda. It was the antipathy of Bush and his senior officials to liberal internationalism that drove the president to address a challenge that mandated the most judicious use of the international system—al-Qaeda-style terrorism—by spitting in the face of that system. And to commit the essentially irrational act of invading Iraq, a country that had nothing to do with 9/11, at a moment when the chief culprits of 9/11 were still at large (and after Bush had won a 15–0 Security Council vote giving

JIM COLBURN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Gushing: For Clinton National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, Obama promises to bring about a "fundamental" reordering of the global system.

him complete inspection access to Iraq: a great triumph, had he stopped there).

Let's confront facts. Most other presidents have understood that, once elected, their only priority was to govern well, and that the most passionate ideologues who made up their political base had little place in decision making. Eisenhower, for example, kept the fiery right-wing John Foster Dulles in check during testing moments like the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. Later in the '50s, when the rollbackers reasserted themselves, urging a preemptive strike to prevent Moscow from getting long-range-missile capability, Ike again showed them the door. He wrote in his diary that a preemptive strike was "impossible," and would "violate national tradition." That was pretty much it for the extreme right, which found its only solace in McCarthyism and the nuclearization of containment.

Of course, some GOP true believers disdain "Eisenhower Republicanism." But Ronald Reagan, Bush's putative model, acted more like Ike once he found his footing in office. People mainly remember the "evil empire" rhetoric from his first term and the overreaching of Iran-Contra from his second. What they forget is that Reagan outraged his right-wing China lobby by phasing out arms sales to Taiwan in 1982, and that he angered anti-Soviet hard-liners by moving from rhetorical brinkmanship to genuine negotiations with the Kremlin (prompting none other than Richard Perle to resign in protest in 1987).

Our government, by contrast, was choked by ideology during the early Bush years. The interagency process was destroyed in the first term, as Cheney and Rumsfeld set up what was effectively an alternative government—the veep's shadow national security council, and Doug Feith's Office of Special Plans. They frequently bypassed then National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, and all but ignored Colin Powell. So dysfunctional did things get that at the same time, for example, that State Department official Ryan Crocker (soon to be the next U.S. ambassador to Iraq) was secretly negotiating with the Iranians in Paris to stabilize Afghanistan, Rumsfeld was dispatching the neocon operatives Larry Franklin and Harold Rhode to the same city to meet covertly with Manucher Ghorbanifar and other Iranian opposition figures who wanted to topple the regime. Crocker and his colleagues didn't even know about the Ghorbanifar meeting until it was later reported in the media. "This was worse than Iran-Contra," says Hillary Mann, a National Security Council official in Bush's first term who was part of the Crocker team, "because in Iran-Contra many senior officials didn't know. Here they were part of it."

Congress, meanwhile, was treated like an interloper, to the seething frustration of many Republicans as well as Democrats. Ideological junk science infected the policy-making apparatus on key issues of importance to our allies in Europe and Asia, like global warming. The glorious experiment in checks-and-balance governance that was once the envy of the world began to function like a Third World junta.

The best proof of how far overboard Bush went in his first term is how much he's retreating from those extreme policies, and re-embracing the international system, as he enters the final two years of his presidency. Many of the neocon ideologues of the first term are gone, or marginalized. Bush's current effort to isolate nuclear-minded Iran—including a very effective policy of asphyxiating Iran's economy by pressuring international banks into cutting off dealings with it—depends entirely on the UN Security Council resolution passed last year, which legitimizes sanctions. And in mid-February, the president endorsed a fuel-for-nukes accord with North Korea, under which Pyongyang will immediately get 50,000 tons of emergency fuel oil with nearly a million more tons to come in return for shutting down its

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nuclear program. The agreement is plainly a betrayal of the administration's previous principled stand against the "nuclear blackmail" that it accused Bill Clinton of succumbing to, and represents a 180-degree turnabout from Bush's previous refusal to negotiate with a regime he viewed as illegitimate—so much so that its fiercest critic was none other than John Bolton, who had just resigned as UN ambassador. And it reportedly took the White House's most senior neocon, Elliott Abrams, by surprise. Former senior administration members told me the pact could have been concluded only because several key hard-liners—including Rumsfeld and Bolton—had left, and because Cheney's influence had waned.

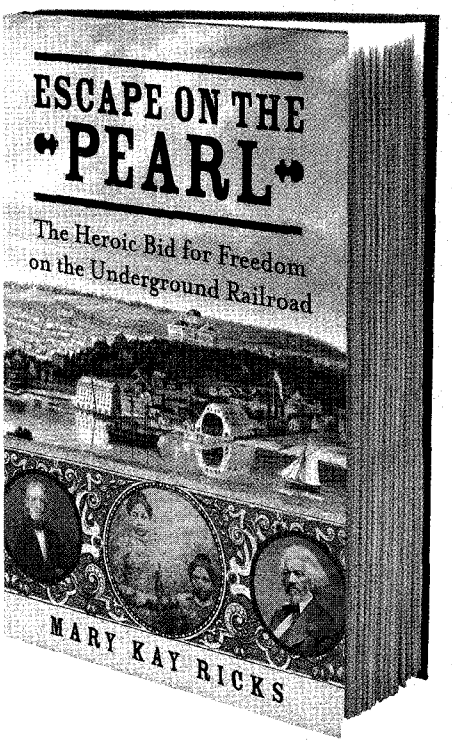
Another significant sign of the shift in Bush's attitude came the day before the agreement, when, in an interview with C-SPAN, he was asked who he thought were the most underrated presidents. "Well, George H. W. Bush is one of them," the president said. For Bush watchers who had long seen the son as an overzealous Reaganite in a state of rebellion against his father's internationalist administration, this was a striking statement. Six years into an administration marked by a reluctance to negotiate its way out of trouble—most recently when Bush rejected the advice of his father's secretary of state, James Baker, about sitting down with Iran and Syria—Bush seems to have developed a new appreciation for Bush 41's moderate views about "talking to the enemy."

It is largely because of the wrongheadedness of the first term's radical agenda, and the arrogance with which it was pursued—not because something has gone terribly wrong with the international security system—that we have squandered the world's trust, and today find ourselves unable to use American power as a force for good. The current state of play over the issue of Darfur illustrates this. Many foreign policy experts—including Lake, haunted by his own failure, as Clinton's national security adviser, to stop the genocide in Rwanda—are calling for aggressive intervention. Power, by contrast, was among those calling for action on Rwanda, but now thinks, along with many others, that Bush would do more harm than good by sending U.S. troops into another Muslim region of the world, even with the best of intentions.

RESTORING THE EMPIRE OF LIBERTY

Defending an existing system of international relations presents some obvious challenges for politicians and their vision crafters. Though the system still functions, trying to appreciate it is, to the average voter, like grabbing at air. You can't feel it or touch it—you'll only know it was ever there when it's gone. And the vague idea that what we need is to get our hands on the tiller of that global system hardly lends itself to a campaign sound bite,

A TALE OF COURAGE AND TRIUMPH



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as Kerry found out in 2004 when he tried to make essentially that case. But one reason Kerry sounded incoherent was that he didn't attack Bush's approach explicitly enough (at least until the last six weeks of his campaign). That's what candidates for 2008 must do, not just to win the White House, but to restore American prestige once there.

What's needed is not a new birth of liberalism or of conservatism—or cleverly titled ideological mergers of the two—but just one good Democrat or Republican with the courage to say, repeatedly, that invading Iraq was irrational, that the entire war on terror has been misconceived, that the last six years have been such an aberration as to constitute the most disastrous foreign policy in the nation's history, and that reason will now rule again. I think that person will win.

And he or she will find that restoring American prestige may be more achievable than many think. Almost every government understands that if Al Gore had gotten those 537 votes in Florida in 2000, we wouldn't be in this situation. No one begrudged us the invasion of Afghanistan. Imagine the payoff in prestige if Bush had brought into the international community a pariah country that had defeated two previous imperial powers—Britain and Russia—in the last two centuries. Contrary to what you might hear, this was possible. The Afghans themselves, in stark contrast to the pent-up Iraqis, were so desperately tired of twenty-three years of civil war that most of them welcomed us with open arms. Virtually every warlord was up for sale at knockdown prices. (As Ismail Qasimyar, head of the loya jirga commission, told me when I was there in 2002, war-weary Afghans saw that "a window of opportunity had been opened for them" and that Afghanistan had become "a baby of the international community.") What an exercise in the judicious use of our great power that would have been, and what a trophy to place on the shelf after Germany and Japan following World War II! Instead we made up a new war.

If there is any hope for us, it is that our destiny as the empire of liberty is still there to be grasped anew.

Bush's early failure to retain his focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan—which at the time were truly the last refuges of al-Qaeda—points up how fundamental his error was in spurning, rather than embracing, the international system. At bottom, his misunderstanding of the al-Qaeda menace and the international system were the same mistake. The transnational terror threat that al-Qaeda represents is a creature of that system, and cannot be properly understood outside of it. The threat of such groups stems from their ability to use the tools of the international system as weapons against us (open trade, jet travel, and information networks) and to hide in the system's hardest-to-reach cracks (in other words, failed states). By contrast, the Bush team devoted most of its energy to supposed axis-of-evil "state sponsors," like Saddam Hussein, who in truth were little more than interested onlookers and were usually deterrable. The Bush administration's own National Security Strategy of 2002 said it plainly enough: "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones." We're learning this again as al-Qaeda sets up shop anew in the quasi-failing Afghanistan and in the uncontrolled regions of Iraq. But Bush was so busy portraying the contained and increasingly doddering Saddam Hussein as a potential conqueror—indeed, the next Hitler—that he didn't follow his administration's own sage advice.

Had the al-Qaeda threat been properly handled after 9/11—in other words, had the focus remained on its last harbors, Afghanistan and Pakistan—that small, fractious terror group could very well have been wiped out early. (Just ask Gary Bernsten, the CIA officer in charge of the "Jawbreaker" operation at Tora Bora, who implored Rumsfeld, in vain, for more U.S. special forces while bin Laden escaped.) Such an approach could also have supplied numerous opportunities for reviving the stature of the UN, and even restoring U.S.-Iran ties. Jim Dobbins, Bush's former special envoy to Kabul, says the cooperation between Washington and Tehran in setting up the Hamid Karzai government, including Iran's help in neutralizing dangerous warlords under its influence, was extraordinary. "What was unprecedented here was the degree to which this blossomed into a genuine partnership," Dobbins says. But in January 2002, a week after Iran pledged $550 million to the Afghan effort—the largest amount of any non-OECD country—Bush decided to lump Tehran in with Iraq and North Korea as part of the axis of evil.

This is not to gloss over the menace that Iran represents today. But there are still many moderates in Tehran who are eager to remain part of the international system. Hence the growing rebellion of Iranian elites against Mahmoud Ahmadinejad after the UN Security Council labeled Tehran, in effect, a rogue regime under Chapter VII last year. Bush and his top advisers were very late in understanding how to exploit this—what it really means for a self-respecting state to be a pariah in the international system. As the Bush team has come belatedly to recognize, the episode bears out a reality that his administration once denied: that there is indeed a functioning international community. (The Condoleezza Rice who repeats ad nauseam these days that Iran has been

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isolated by the international community is the same woman who pronounced that community to be "illusory" in the first term.)

For too long, the Bush administration pursued a chimera of a worldview composed of equal parts Hobbesian darkness (Cheney), and utopian remake-the-world grandiosity (Bush). The president took far too long to look beneath his feet and see that he was standing on the shoulders of giants, the American leaders and their allies who built the postwar system, a system whose treaties and common values had worked fairly well to contain and shrivel the ambitions of rogue actors like Saddam, and to force bin Laden to operate from the darkest corners of the earth. Understanding this now will show us the way forward as well. Only a president who acknowledges all these missed opportunities—that is, the full extent of America's foreign policy disaster under Bush—is likely to have the courage and integrity to do what needs to be done, starting on January 21, 2009.

First, end the war on terror. Just declare it over. It is a historical cul-de-sac, an ill-defined conflict without prospect of end on the terms Bush has laid out. Having gradually expanded his definition of the war on terror to include all Islamic "extremists," among them Hezbollah, Hamas, and radical political groups yet unborn, Bush has plainly condemned us to a permanent war—and one in which we are all but alone, since no one else agrees on such a broadly defined enemy. So let's replace the war on terror with the kind of coordinated effort that the fight always should have entailed: a hybrid covert-war-and-criminal-roundup confined to al-Qaeda and its spawn, conducted with deep intelligence and special forces cooperation among states within the international system. Only if the next president focuses narrowly on true transnational terrorism, and wins back all the natural allies we've lost, can he or she finally achieve America's goal of making the tolerance of 9/11-style acts as anathema to the international community as support of slavery. No state, no matter how marginal, would dare harbor al-Qaeda-type groups any longer, or even be able to look away if the terrorists tried to settle within its borders. This is the only way to finish off al-Qaeda once and for all.

It is also why the next president, while denouncing the Iraq War as irrational, needs to advocate a continuing U.S. presence in that country. The fight against al-Qaeda must focus on failed states, and whether Iraq has become one by our own doing no longer matters. We have no choice but to be there.

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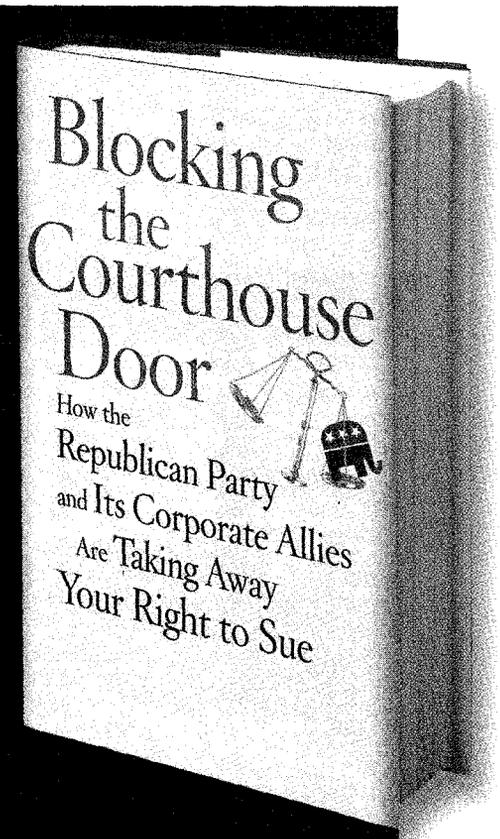

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The next president will also need to cut a deal with Tehran, one that freezes its nuclear program short of the weapons stage. The diplomatic leverage is there—and getting stronger—and Iranian diplomats have even now signaled they would accept an international consortium overseeing the program. Here again, Bush's man-on-the-moon neocon dreaming about regime change needs simply to be thrown out, in the same way he disposed of similar views of Kim Jong Il in February. So far this hasn't happened. As Hillary Mann, the former Bush NSC adviser, told me, describing the president's first-term view of Tehran: "The argument was that the regime is weak, and if you talk to it, and, God forbid, enter into a grand bargain with it, then you legitimize forever a regime that is rotten to its core. They analogized it to what would have happened if the U.S. had made a comprehensive pact with Mikhail Gorbachev. It would have solidified the Soviet Union." This way of thinking is gibberish (as everyone now knows, the Soviet Union was going to collapse no matter what deal Gorby cut with Reagan). The radical, possibly crazy, Ahmadinejad needs to be marginalized, and the only way to do that is to find common ground with the many moderates in Tehran who are as eager to negotiate now as they were a few years ago.

Finally, the moment will be ripe for the president to embrace reform of the UN in a genuine way, now that the American people have experienced profoundly the pitfalls of unilateralism. The next president will discover that many of the democracy-promotion projects the Bush administration has tried to get off the ground—the latest is out of the shop of Stephen Krasner, the State Department chief of policy planning—are already under way at the UN and just require quiet U.S. backing. Some key Bush administration officials like Krasner now concede it's quite impossible to replace, from the ground up, the global institutions, like the UN, that they once dismissed as relics. "No one is talking about redoing what we did in the late '40s," Krasner told me.

Samantha Power herself takes hope from the Bush administration's halfhearted intervention in Darfur through the UN—the high-level attention shown by former Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, and more recently by envoy Andrew Natsios. She also welcomes the administration's reluctant acceptance of prosecutions of war criminals by the International Criminal Court. "Things are happening, but the messenger is wrong," she says.

If the next president follows through on all these things, he or she may just find that the old system is still there, along with the old hunger for American leadership. The rest of the world knows it suffers from the lack of an alternative great power to lead the global system. Other nations are too weak or distrusted (think China, which has never had a political reckoning with its ruling mandarins; or Russia, which seems to be building its reputation on greed and assassination; or the European Union, which remains a cacophony of voices). If there is any hope for us, it is that our destiny as the empire of liberty is still there to be grasped anew, wobbly and fuzzy though it now may seem. We remain the only great nation that governs itself, if badly, by the same universal principles that most of the rest of the world wants to embrace.

For all his openness to rethinking first principles, there's reason to believe that this is something Obama understands better than any other leading candidate. "I don't oppose all wars," he declared in 2002, while Hillary Clinton and John Edwards were triangulating their way toward authorizing the Iraq invasion. "What I am opposed to is a dumb war." Perhaps, ultimately, this is his real value right now. Not as the perfect vessel for a shining new world order. Though, of course, he is just that: Who could better reassure a jittery and suspicious world that America is ready to resume global leadership than a new young president who is the son of a black African father and a white Kansan mother, with a Muslim middle name who grew up in Asia? Rather, Obama's value is as someone with the courage, independence, and basic common sense to declare, without equivocation, that America's loss of global leadership is a result not of the inevitable breakdown of the existing structure, but of the Bush administration's radical and disastrous policy decisions. And that, with the right mix of patience, wisdom, and common sense, we're not as far from reclaiming that leadership as it might appear. WM

Michael Hirsh is a senior editor at *Newsweek*, based in Washington, and the author of *At War With Ourselves: Why America Is Squandering Its Chance to Build a Better World*.

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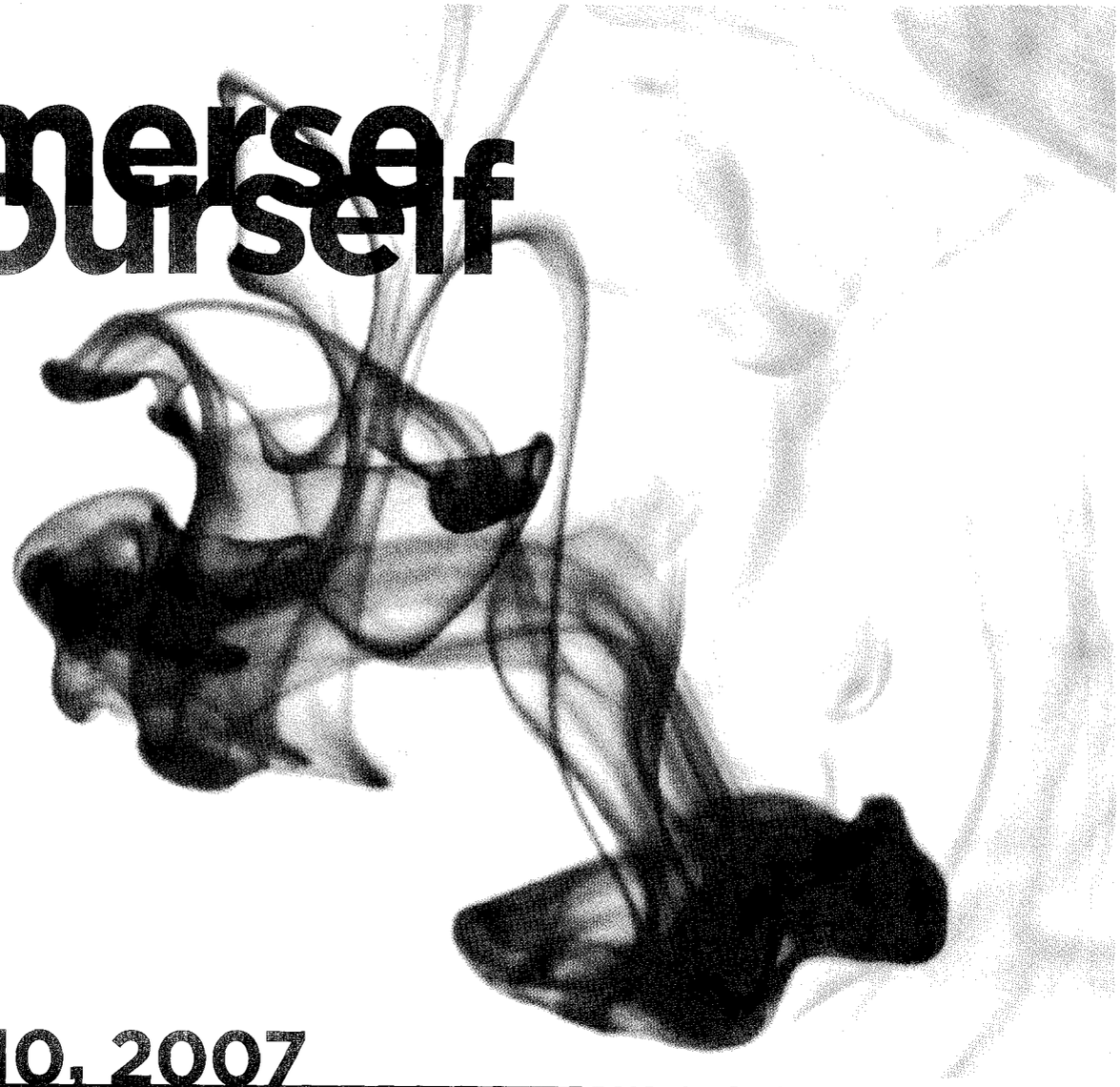

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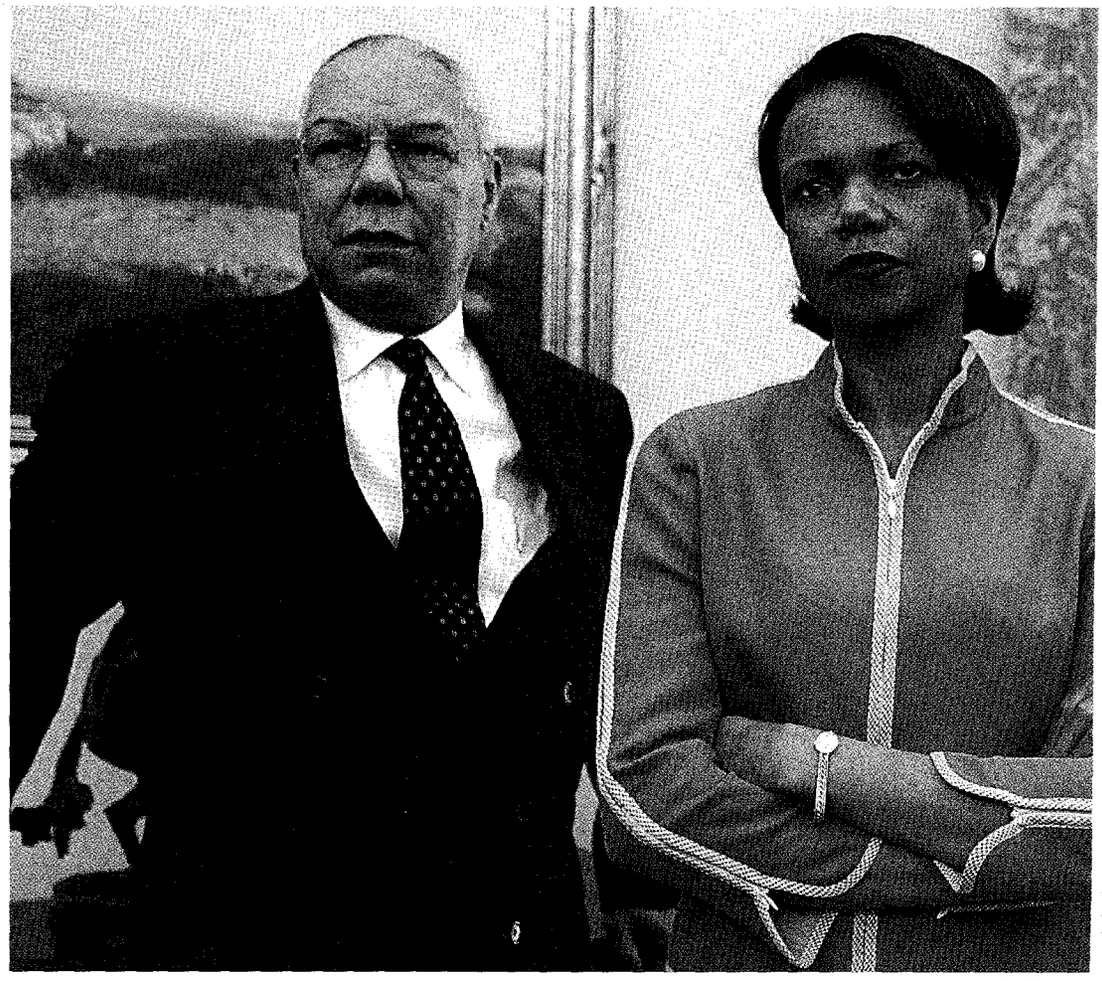

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Condi's Conundrum

Will Rice get Powelled?

By Laura Rozen

In 2005, when Condoleezza Rice became secretary of state, she took over from someone with whom she shared more than a few similarities: Colin Powell. Like Powell, Rice enjoys popularity beyond that of anyone else in the administration. Like Powell, she was schooled in the realist tradition of foreign policy thinking. And, like Powell, she now finds herself, two years into a Bush term, in a high-stakes game of geopolitical brinkmanship, the outcome of which will determine whether we are plunged into a new Persian Gulf war. With Powell, it was Iraq; with Rice, Iran.

Four years ago, Powell voiced considerable skepticism about the wisdom of invading Iraq, whereas Rice, according to most accounts, agreed with—or at least accommodated—those in the administration bent on Iraqi regime change. But as secretary of state, she seems to have become, over the past year, the leader of efforts within the administration to find a negotiated settlement with Iran over its presumed nuclear weapons program, one that avoids direct military confrontation. Rice certainly has at least one powerful motive for averting a war with

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Iran: her own reputation. Over the past two years, as books by Bob Woodward, Ron Suskind, and others have exposed the administration's inner workings, Rice's competence and credibility have been called into question. (Woodward cited George H. W. Bush as saying that as national security adviser, Rice was a "disappointment" and "not up to the job.") Her legacy now rests on her ability to solve the Iran crisis peacefully.

In this, she possesses advantages Powell lacked. She is one of the president's most trusted confidants, something Powell could never claim. And as a result of the disaster in Iraq (and the disaster for Republicans at the polls last fall) most of the hard-liners who made Powell's life miserable in Bush's first term are gone or have been sidelined—though the vice president and his sizeable national security staff are still powerful.

What remains the same is that a secretary of state in the Bush administration is extremely constrained. Rice belongs to an administration averse to real diplomacy with its adversaries, and therefore lacks a secretary of state's most elemental tool: the authority to negotiate directly. In more than a year of intensive reporting on U.S. policy vis-à-vis Iran, in numerous ongoing conversations with administration officials and Iran watchers, I've observed how Rice, in attempting to take the lead on Iran policy, has had to walk a very taut tightrope. On the one hand, she must mollify those in the administration still bent on regime change in Iran. On the other, she has taken the lead of a new crop of experts who believe in modifying Iran's behavior through diplomacy. Recently, her team has achieved some notable successes. On February 26, for instance, the *Washington Post's* David Ignatius reported that the United States planned to join Iran to discuss Iraq security at a Baghdad conference in March.

But the difficulty Rice faces is that every successful effort to pressure Iran through firm but peaceful means has the potential to be hijacked by those seeking grounds for military confrontation—just as Powell's efforts once were. Will Rice's gamble on diplomacy work, despite the formidable odds, or will she get Powelled? That is precisely the question that lingers in the minds of some within the State Department. "People are very conscious of Iraq," one official involved with Iran policy told me, on condition of anonymity. "And they realize there are people who would love to see this be a runaway train."

The great fear is that Rice's entire diplomatic effort could be used to justify future military confrontation.

One of Colin Powell's greatest problems as secretary of state was the fact that his counterpart at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, ran an infinitely bigger bureaucracy able to throw more resources at issues like Iraq. Although Rice's arrival at the State Department in 2005 appeared to offer the promise of a higher-profile diplomatic element to Bush's second-term foreign policy, she suffered from a similar difficulty. "It's astounding how little knowledge there is on basic issues," one government source told me last May on condition of anonymity, referring to the administration's Iran capacity. "There is no expertise ... How do you run a government this way?"

To counter Rumsfeld and Cheney, Rice would have to fight asymmetrically. So she used her access to the president, worked to restore frayed U.S. alliances, and moved to beef up her department's intellectual and policy talent. She quickly recruited an all-star team of nonideological bureaucrats and diplomats as her inner circle. These included her friend and former fellow Bush 41 National Security Council colleague Philip Zelikow; and Nicholas Burns, who had been Clinton's ambassador to Greece and the spokesman for Madeleine Albright's State Department, and now became the top envoy on Iran. Christopher Hill, a foreign service veteran and three-time ambassador who made his name as a top peace negotiator during the Balkan wars, was appointed envoy on North Korea.

In the early spring of 2006, in part as a result of the disintegrating situation in Iraq, America faced the prospect of a newly resurgent Iran, which was supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon and Shiite militants in Iraq, and suspected of building nuclear weapons. As the administration considered its response, it was divided between the regime changers (a faction of hard-liners who argued internally that Washington should continue to shun Iran and work ultimately to replace its leadership) and the so-called behavior changers (the moderates in the bureaucracy, Congress, and the wider foreign policy elite, including Rice's former boss Brent Scowcroft, who strongly advocated for negotiations).

Rice dealt with this tension in the same way she'd approached the other epic ideological disputes that have divided the administration: she tried to split the difference. Her State Department began to visibly incorporate some of the rhetoric and initiatives of the regime changers, while nodding to those advocating engagement by bolstering U.S. diplomatic efforts to cobble together an international alliance to pressure Iran to back down.

Rice's struggle to gain influence over the administration's Iran policy began to take visible shape in March 2006. In an unclassified memorandum obtained by the Center

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for American Progress, she outlined aggressive measures to boost the department's Iran expertise. These included a deployment of a dozen Farsi-speaking foreign service officers to countries surrounding Iran, and a new Iran "watching station"—a virtual American embassy—in Dubai. Rice also called for—and ultimately received—$85 million from Congress to support pro-democracy, human rights, and civil society efforts in Iran, including $50 million to expand U.S.-government Farsi language broadcasting to be beamed into the country from Dubai. Finally, she also ordered the creation of a new Office of Iranian Affairs. The office was intended to be a key outpost in Rice's attempt to move Iran policy back under State Department control.

These developments might have seemed like a clear win for the behavior changers, but, as is usually the case in the Bush administration, the reality was more complicated. The new Iran office was staffed by political appointees—veteran democratization specialists from the International Republican Institute, who worked as advisers for Vice President Dick Cheney's daughter, Liz (then the principal deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, and coordinator for broader Middle East and North Africa initiatives). In early May last year, I visited this initiative, located in a warren of offices on the department's second floor. Framed pictures of Persian miniatures and a map of the Persian Gulf were going up on the wood-paneled walls. Later, a department aide would explain to me that there was an argument in government circles over whether the Iran policy should be behavior change or regime change. The aide personally favored regime change, as did many working for Liz Cheney in the department.

Meanwhile, Rice's Iran team was devoting extraordinary diplomatic energy to working the Iran nuclear issue through the United Nations. Led by Burns, the team pushed the International Atomic Energy Association to refer Iran as noncompliant to the UN Security Council, which it did in April 2006. The team also started energetically lobbying members of the Security Council plus Germany to agree to a package of carrots and sticks to pressure Iran to abandon its nuclear program.

Rice has dealt with the tension on Iran in the same way she's approached other epic ideological disputes that have divided the administration: she's tried to split the difference.

At the end of May, Rice pushed the policy as far as she could. In the Ben Franklin Room of the State Department, she made her boldest announcement since becoming secretary of state: The United States would agree to join direct talks with Iran for the first time in twenty-seven years. Iran was given the summer to consider Rice's offer, which was accompanied by pages of inducements from the West, including an international offer to build Iran a civilian nuclear power facility, and economic inducements such as WTO membership. Yet again, though, this wasn't a pure victory for the behavior changers. Instead of offering unconditional negotiations, Rice's proposal included a caveat palatable to the hard-liners that placed the prospect of ever getting to the negotiating table in doubt: Iran had to agree to suspend its uranium enrichment program for the duration of the talks.

Still, an administration official, who declined to be named, at the time described the mood in the department in response to Rice's announcement as "subtly dramatic." He added that for his colleagues who were present in the run-up to the Iraq War, the Iran situation had started to seem like déjà vu. "Something had to be done. And so [Rice] did it. And she had a lot of help; there have been some powerful voices in Washington making this case. She is sticking her neck out a little bit, trying to push this through, and leaving it up to the Iranians to do the right thing."

Rice's conditional offer turned out to be the high-water mark for Iran diplomacy for the next ten months. Emboldened by the U.S. failure in Iraq, Tehran seemed in no hurry to accept the United States' overture. Then, on July 12, Iranian-backed Hezbollah killed three Israeli soldiers and kidnapped two others on the Lebanese border. Israel proceeded to launch a retaliatory air campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon, while Hezbollah lobbed missiles into northern Israel. While the issue is disputed, some analysts have argued that Hezbollah would not have taken such a provocative action without Iran's permission.

The war in Lebanon diminished any modest appetite the White House may have had for cutting a deal with Iran. Rice received the thankless task of negotiating to end the conflict. On July 30, while she was in Israel urging the country's leaders to avoid civilian casualties, the Israeli military bombed the Lebanese town of Qana, accidentally killing dozens of civilians. That night, Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora let Rice know she would be unwelcome in Beirut. At a press conference in Israel, Rice looked stricken; she returned to Washington immediately afterward.

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Although the war in Lebanon was not the decisive victory for Israel that administration hawks hoped it would be, the conflict shifted the balance of power in the government back to the hawks on Iran. Vice President Cheney reportedly began to meet secretly and in public with Saudi officials and other actors outside State Department channels in joint efforts to undermine Iran.

However, Rice's efforts—spearheaded by Burns—to work through the UN Security Council did achieve a breakthrough: on December 23, she won a Chapter VII resolution from the UN Security Council, imposing the first international sanctions on Iran since 1979. This was clearly a victory for those who wanted to work through the international community using nonmilitary means to change Iran's behavior. However, the resolution also happened to suit the hard-liners' agenda. Of course, when Powell urged the administration to seek a UN resolution on Iraq in 2003, the administration allowed him to do so—then used the resolution as a stepping stone to war.

In the afternoon on Valentine's Day of this year, with half of Washington shut down due to a heavy snowfall, Nicholas Burns spoke to a packed house at the Brookings Institution. That week, Washington was perceptibly tense. Just days earlier, the administration had made its oddly furtive case to the press through anonymous military briefers in Baghdad that Iran's al-Quds force was supplying a particularly lethal, armor-piercing form of explosive device to Iraqi Shiite militant groups. Burns's talk stated that the increased administration campaign to pressure Tehran was not part of a march to war, but involved tough, sustained, coercive diplomacy of the type that had succeeded in winning North Korea's agreement to end its nuclear program just a day earlier.

"We are convinced that sooner or later the costs to Iran of its isolation are going to be so profoundly important to them, destructive to their economic potential, that they are going to have to come to the negotiating table," he said. "And we are not going to give up." The cerebral and nonideological Burns gave the impression of a consummately professional diplomat who was communicating a deliberately ambiguous message both to his American and international audience, in which the hint of force was carefully calibrated to reinforce U.S. diplomatic efforts.

For now, it's impossible to tell whether Rice's high-stakes ploy will succeed. Colin Powell believed that by accommodating the hawks, he could gain the leverage he needed to influence the policy for good. Instead, he ended up lending his considerable credibility to a policy of war with Iraq that had already been decided without the State Department's participation.

Up in smoke: The war in Lebanon in summer 2006 set back Condoleezza Rice's efforts to wrest Iran policy from the hard-liners.

Rice has managed to win at least one significant battle with her multilateral approach. On the issue of North Korea, Christopher Hill made an end-run around administration hard-liners to win the president's approval to a deal in which North Korea pledged to end its nuclear program in exchange for economic assistance—an agreement similar to one negotiated by the Clinton administration in 1994 and dismissed for the past six years by the Bush administration as appeasement. But Iran is far more central to the emotional vortex of administration hawks than North Korea, combining as it does the Middle East, tyranny, terrorism, nuclear weapons, oil, Islamic radicalism, and Israel. And unlike North Korea, Iran doesn't have nuclear weapons yet, and the deterrent threat to military action they provide.

Rice knows how the system works. In February, she traveled to Jerusalem to attempt to restart the Middle East peace process. But while she was en route the neoconserva-

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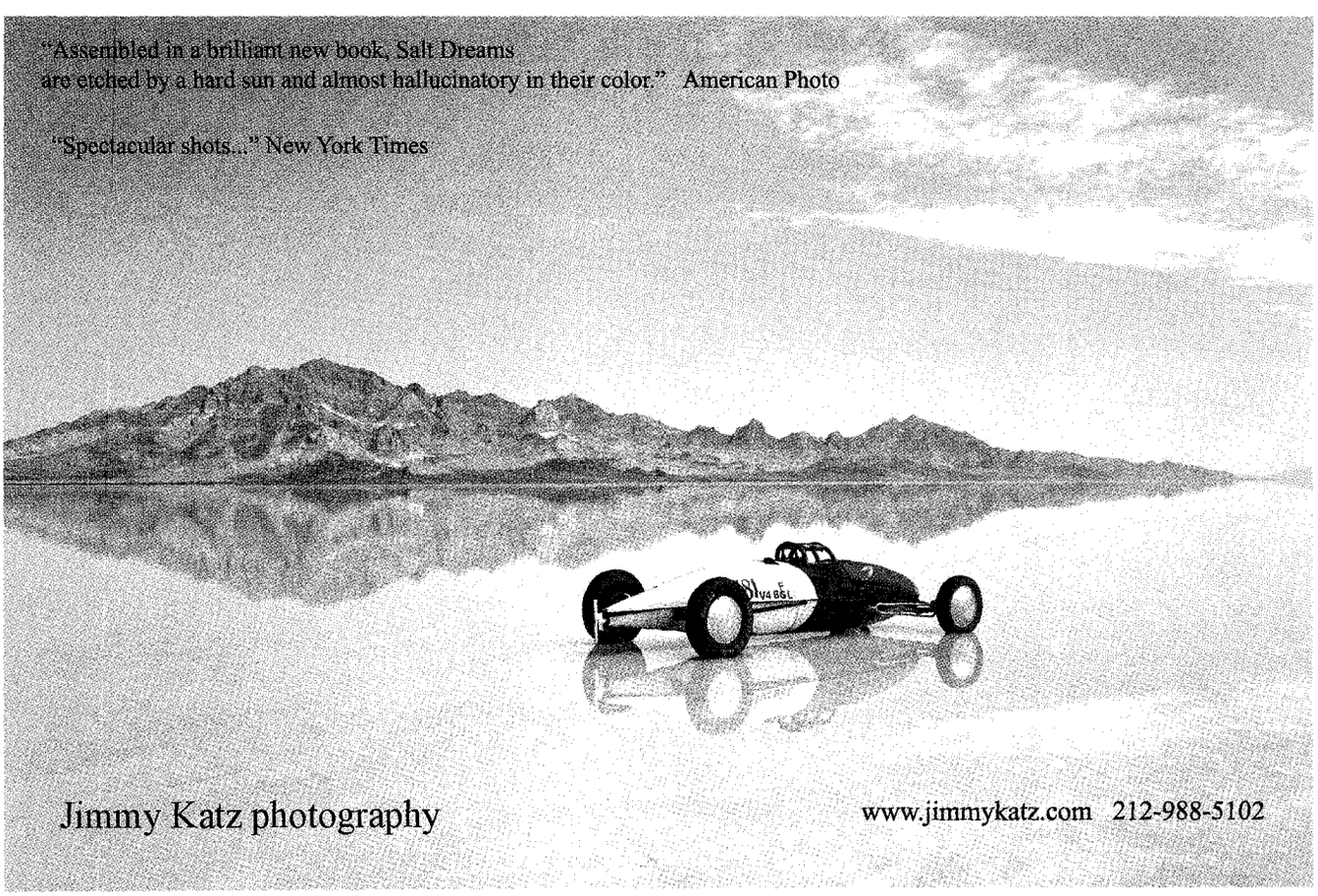
tive NSC adviser Elliott Abrams was, according to news reports, using contacts in the office of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to arrange a phone call between Olmert and Bush. After the call, Olmert announced that Israel would not recognize the Palestinian unity government as a legitimate negotiating partner—an essential precondition for productive talks—and that Bush supported Israel's stance. Her position fatally undercut, Rice returned to Washington empty-handed.

Rice has a powerful motive for averting military conflict with Iran: her own reputation.

The great fear is that Rice's entire diplomatic effort could be used to justify future military confrontation. *Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol made this case publicly in February. "You can't just suddenly use force," Kristol said on Fox News Sunday. "[The question is,] 'Can the president build a predicate if he feels he has to use force?' ... I think if things have stabilized in Iraq, then you could easily build political support for being much tougher on Iran at the beginning of 2008."

The behavior changers hope he's wrong. "It's a finely nuanced thing," a U.S. official involved with Iran policy told me in February. "We do want to pressure them. We want the Iranians to know we could bomb them. It would really hurt them. We are being tough, but that's different than bombing people," he continued. "That's different than a *casus belli* ... The people who are professionals here have only contempt for what happened in the past, and we're very conscious of not being used." The official concluded: "For once, I think we're doing it the right way." WM

Laura Rozen, a national security correspondent for the *Washington Monthly*, reports from Washington, D.C. She can be reached at lkrozen@gmail.com.



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ASIAN PERSUASION

Bush would never have gone to China, but Nixon would surely be talking to Iran.

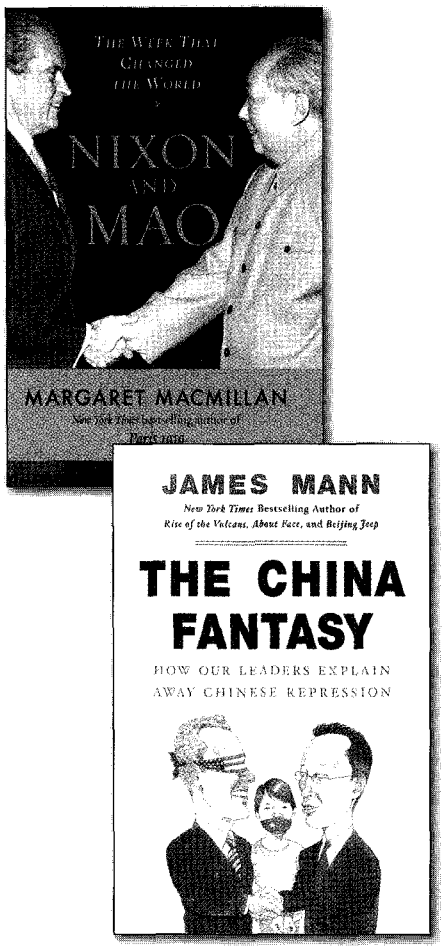
By T. A. Frank

These days, reading a book about a former president—any former president—can be painful. One is reminded that the Oval Office, historically, has been restricted to occupants with the capacity for something resembling thought. Now that our current chief executive has broken this barrier, it's a time of reassessments, and even Richard Nixon has begun to look very, very good. An entertaining new book, *Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World*, by the Canadian historian Margaret MacMillan, only heightens the effect. MacMillan is best known as the author of *Paris 1919*, a lively account of the six months spent hammering out what would become the Treaty of Versailles, and in *Nixon and Mao* she takes a similarly spirited approach to a shorter interval: Nixon's trip to the People's Republic of China in 1972, when ties between China and the United States were reopened. It's a well-timed commemoration of what diplomacy, done right, can achieve.

Nixon may have spent most of his presidency at the helm of an unpopular war, but his main interest was in peace (if rarely of a sentimental sort). This meant operating quietly and eschewing brinksmanship. Typical was the opening of a *Time* magazine article from April 1969: "It was a week of intensive diplomatic activity on a variety of fronts for the Nixon Administration. And in encounter after encounter, the motif was conciliation." (The article went on to note that Nixon had defused a crisis with Peru over a seizure of U.S. oil companies, discussed with NATO allies the idea of a détente with the Warsaw Pact bloc, and received an endorsement from the king of Jordan for pursuing a policy in the Middle East that was "even-handed.") Indeed, one Nixonian contradiction among myriads was that a man so famously inept in everyday social interactions could nevertheless oversee such polished diplomacy.

The results were more than just talk. In 1969, Nixon initiated the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks that would result in the SALT treaties. In 1972, he became the first sitting U.S. president to pay an official visit to Moscow, where, from behind an ornate rococo table at the Kremlin, he delivered a nationally televised speech to Soviet viewers about turning "our countries away from a wasteful and dangerous arms race and towards more production for peace." On that same trip, Nixon signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, an agreement that endured until the current Bush presidency. And he eventually reduced the U.S. presence in Vietnam and brought about the 1973 Paris Peace Accords, however ill-fated.

Nixon's trip to China, though, is what people remember best, and for good reason. Rarely has an alliance been formed between unlikelier partners. China, commonly called Red China at the time, to distinguish it from Taiwan, was a true rogue state.



Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World
By Margaret MacMillan
Random House, 432 pp.

The China Fantasy: How Our Leaders Explain Away Chinese Repression
By James Mann
Viking, 144 pp.

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Its chairman, Mao Zedong, had once proposed attacking U.S. troops with Soviet nuclear weapons. The country's Cultural Revolution, a period of state-sponsored mayhem that had led to hundreds of thousands of senseless deaths, had only recently begun to taper off. And China had provided Hanoi with weapons being used on U.S. soldiers. Oh, and one more thing: it didn't want to talk.

Nixon may have spent most of his presidency at the helm of an unpopular war, but his main interest was in peace (if rarely of a sentimental sort).

Presented with such manure, Nixon somehow coaxed out roses. MacMillan engagingly narrates how it was done. The White House knew that it had one important thing in common with China: a fear of Moscow, which was meddling inelegantly in areas where both Peking and Washington preferred to meddle inelegantly themselves. That was a sufficient start. The main stumbling block, as it turned out, was not over political ideologies but over something more tangible and pesky: Taiwan. China insisted that the United States disown Taiwan and relegate it to reunification with the mainland by any means deemed necessary, and until that happened, there would be nothing to discuss.

As history records, the two sides, thanks largely to Henry Kissinger, Nixon's national security adviser, found a way to work through the problem. The understanding that Kissinger helped to bring about, recorded in what is known as the Shanghai Communiqué, is sufficiently creative and elegant to join what must be an extremely slim collection of diplomatic position papers that can be read for pleasure. Since China refused to engage in standard diplomatic artifice, the task was even more delicate. Here is part of China's contribution:

> *The Taiwan question is the crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States; the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government of China; Taiwan is a province of China which has long been returned to the motherland; the liberation of Taiwan is China's internal affair in which no other country has the right to interfere; and all U.S. forces and military installations must be withdrawn from Taiwan. The Chinese Government firmly opposes any activities which aim at the creation of "one China, one Taiwan," "one China, two governments," "two Chinas," an "independent Taiwan" or advocate that "the status of Taiwan remains to be determined."*

And here is how the U.S. side dealt with it:

> *The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime, it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes.*

Nixon returned to Washington, and more than two decades of hostile separation between the United States and China were brought to a close. Moscow panicked and fumed—and eagerly resumed arms negotiations with the United States.

If *Nixon and Mao* is an implicit ode to diplomacy, *The China Fantasy: How Our Leaders Explain Away Chinese Repression*, by the author James Mann, is an implicit reproach to it. Mann accepts that we may have needed to bend a bit to establish the friendship in 1972, but he laments that we've been bending ever since. In Mann's view, elites in the United States have convinced themselves that China is inevitably headed, either through evolution or upheaval, toward liberty and rule of law. But what, he asks, if it isn't? What if China becomes stronger every decade yet continues to oppress at home and spread mischief abroad?

Mann coins two terms to describe visions that experts have of China's future: the "Soothing Scenario" and the "Upheaval Scenario." Adherents of the Soothing Scenario, such as Bill Clinton, believe that trade and improved standards of living in China will eventually bring about improvements in human rights. Supporters of the Upheaval Scenario, such as Gordon G. Chang (author of *The Coming Collapse of China*), predict that contradictions and inequity in China will lead to political turmoil and collapse. But Mann is worried that China might remain stable and repressive, an outcome he calls the "Third Scenario." And what then?

This could be a fascinating topic. After all, Mann is a superb journalist. His best seller *Rise of the Vulcans*, published in 2004, is indispensable to anyone looking to understand the origins and evolution of the thinking in Bush's war cabinet. To make the idea behind *The China Fantasy* fill a book, however, would require two things. One would be an argument that a politically stagnant or regressive China is likely, and the other would be a notion of what we should do about it. In both respects, Mann comes up short. Instead, the book gives the impression of something written in haste.

Mann is probably right to claim that conventional wisdom favors the Soothing Scenario. Many experts would say that China, viewed in ten-year stretches, has become, by most measures, freer. In

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1977, the country was totalitarian, just emerging from the rule of Mao. By 1987, leader Deng Xiaoping had opened the country to foreign investment, and restrictions on speech and association were vastly relaxed, with students even demonstrating occasionally for greater intellectual freedom. By 1997, the country had been connected to the Web, lifestyle magazines were cropping up, and the private sector provided more employment than ever. By 2007, the country boasted more than half a million Web sites, more than a hundred million Internet users, and a reformed system of residency registration that removed many oppressive rules on who could live where.

To be sure, finding evidence of repression in contemporary China is easy. There's plenty of it. Mann points to political prisoners, bans on political parties, inequality between urban and rural areas, and arrests by secret police. All true. But that's not really the point. If the argument is one of trends, then specifics about today aren't really relevant unless they're viewed in comparison to what was happening yesterday. If Soothing Scenario types can point to positive long-term trends, then, surely, disputing them requires evidence of negative long-term countertrends.

Let's assume, though, that what Mann fears is correct, and China is politically stagnant or worse. What then does he suggest we do? Here's as detailed as his answer gets:

> *On the one hand, it is possible that America may seek new measures to goad the Chinese leadership toward democratic change. America also might want to reconsider its doctrinaire adherence to free trade in dealing with China. Alternatively ... American could opt for a policy of sheer acceptance of the existing order. The American people are not being given such options now, because the choices are not being laid out.*

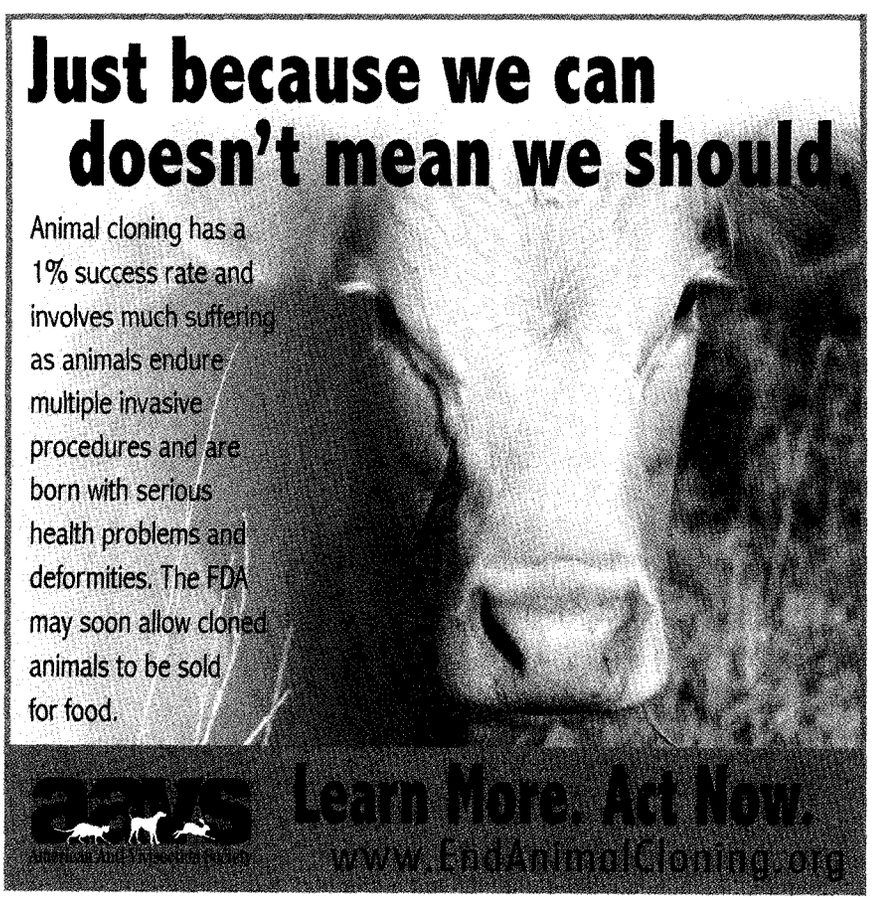
In other words: I don't know, maybe we should do nothing. But we should be thinking about it.

None of this is to say that Mann isn't right to challenge the consensus on China. Maybe American experts are complacent and could use a kick in the rear. But an author resisting the tide must work much harder than an author sailing with the tide. Mann, in this book, is a rebel without the work. He raises valid questions, but, with only the skimpiest helping of facts, figures, and supporting evidence, manages mainly to repeat himself.

Whether or not Mann's book succeeds, it reflects a broader public frustration with China's repression and an increased skepticism over whether U.S. policies have benefited either us or the Chinese. As a question of economics, this is a complicated matter, but, at the very least, many positive results of engagement are evident in other areas. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese have studied in the United States, and tens of thousands of Americans have done the same in China. Thanks in part to such cross-pollination, China has been opened up greatly, and both sides understand each other better. If nothing else, this has made us safer.

Certainly, anyone who regards China closely will find much injustice to deplore, and many observers wish the United States would stiffen its moral backbone and take more of a stand. But maybe the old backbone could use a break. It's had a pretty good run lately. In 2003, for instance, the White House rebuffed an offer from Tehran to discuss a comprehensive peace with the United States. That took backbone. No, what might work better is a dose of traditional Nixonian statecraft, something that seems as remote today as a sentry post on the Great Wall. Nixon, who was open to negotiation, regularly shook hands with enemies; Bush, firm in his principles, spurns such interactions. Has appeasement ever looked so good? WM

T. A. Frank is an editor of the *Washington Monthly*.



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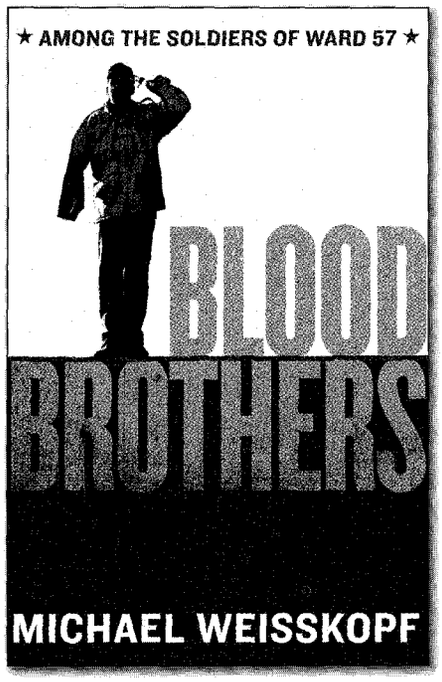
LIFE AND LIMB

A journalist's account of surviving the signature injury of the Iraq War

By Ronald Glasser



Blood Brothers: Among the Soldiers of Ward 57
By Michael Weisskopf
Henry Holt and Company, 320 pp.

Michael Weisskopf never intended to become part of his own story. The fifty-seven-year-old senior correspondent for *Time* magazine was in Iraq in December 2003 on a coveted assignment—to profile the American soldier chosen as *Time*'s Person of the Year. For three weeks, Weisskopf was embedded with a platoon of the legendary 1st Armored Division, which was based in Sunni-dominated northwest Baghdad. On the night of December 10, Weisskopf was along on the platoon's routine night patrol when he heard a clatter inside the Humvee. As Weisskopf writes in his new book, *Blood Brothers: Among the Soldiers of Ward 57*,

> *At first I thought it was a rock, the specialty of the street urchins—a harmless shot against an armored Humvee. But the clanking sound that interrupted my thoughts couldn't be ignored ... [I]t bounced off the steel blast wall behind me. I gazed down, then to the right, and spotted an object on the wooden bench two feet away. The dark oval was as shiny and smooth as a tortoiseshell, roughly six inches long and four inches wide ... [S]omething told me there was no time to consult the other soldiers ... I rose halfway, leaned to the right, and cupped the object. I might as well have plucked volcanic lava from a crater. I could feel the flesh of my palm liquefying ... [I] raised my right arm and started to throw the mass over the side of the vehicle, a short backhand toss. Then everything went dark.*

The grenade never made it out of the Humvee. Weisskopf took the brunt of the blast, saving the lives of everyone in the vehicle but losing his right hand in the explosion. "I shook my right arm, trying to wake it up," he remembers. "Still no response, I elevated it to see why ... My wrist looked like the neck of a decapitated chicken. The wound was jagged, blood glistening in the light."

The week that followed was hellish: multiple surgeries were needed to clean Weisskopf's wound and relieve the pressure on his injured arm. A spray of shrapnel remained buried in his right upper thigh. An Army transport plane carried Weisskopf to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, where, during a routine procedure to clean the wound, Weisskopf ended up with heart arrhythmia, which landed him in the ICU. Finally, well after midnight on December 17, a week after his hand had been blown off, Weisskopf arrived at "Amputee Alley," Walter Reed Army Medical Center's Ward 57, specially designated to treat amputees of the Iraq War. (Weisskopf, the Ward's fifty-sixth amputee since the start of the war, was the first journalist ever to be a patient at the vaunted medical facility.)

Blood Brothers is not so much a book about the invasion of Iraq. Nor is it merely a paean to the much-praised staff and facilities at Walter Reed, though it is partially that. (*Blood Brothers* was published before the *Washington Post* carried, in February, a devastating exposé of shoddy facilities leased by Walter Reed to house some patients and their families.) The book is, instead, a tightly written insider account of what has become an all-too-frequent experience of those serving in Iraq: losing a limb.

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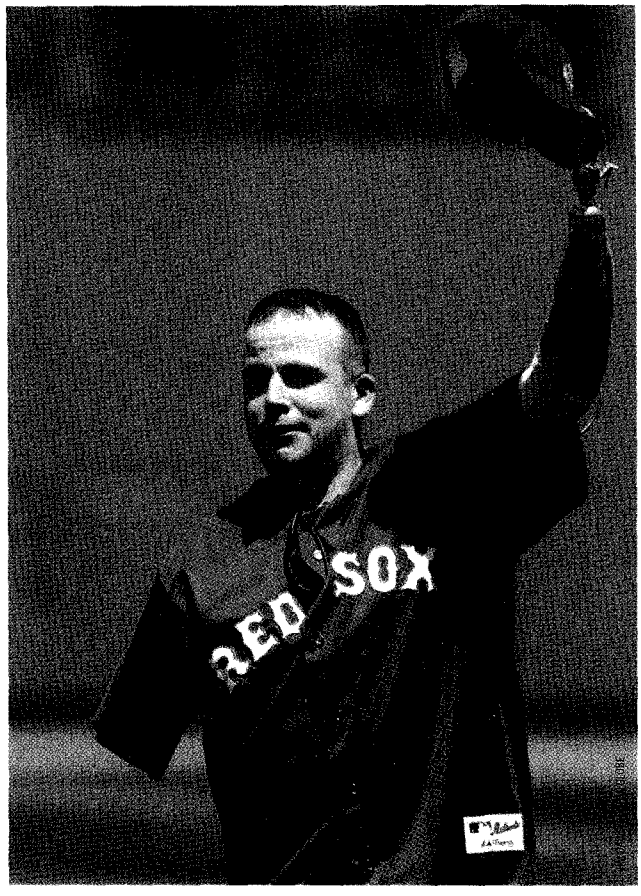
Doctors at Walter Reed could predict what to expect from the Iraq conflict. Because of advances in battlefield medicine—tourniquets that can be tied with one hand, blood-clotting pellets made in part from volcanic ash, better life-support systems on medevac choppers—more soldiers' lives could be saved. But that blessing would in turn mean that more would be coming back with multiple grievous injuries. Nurses were told to expect "a new breed of patient: young, in chronic pain, traumatized, and long-term."

The predictions proved correct. In Iraq, the American military has lost one for every ten soldiers hit in combat, compared to a one-in-four fatality rate in Vietnam, and one in three during the Second World War. Because of the nature of the attacks on American soldiers—primarily from improvised explosive devices (IEDs)—and more widespread use of body armor, the soldiers' extremities have taken the greatest punishment. More than half the wounded in Iraq have injured or missing limbs.

"The toll was stupefying," writes Weisskopf.

> *My neighbor to the left was a twenty-six-year-old former all-state high school runner from New Jersey whose whole left leg was amputated above the knee and his right knee connected to his hip by a titanium rod. Down the hall, a twenty-four-year-old Virginian who loved to drive fast cars was missing both legs above the knee. Across from him a twenty-two-year-old expectant father from Pittsburgh, blinded and separated from both his hands ... the litany of misery moved from bed to bed ... I recognized the common plight of men who'd come home with less than they had left with—the trajectory of a life stopped cold in a hospital bed.*



National Guardsman Pete Damon, after tossing out the ceremonial first pitch at Fenway in 2005

Men—and it was all men in Ward 57—lived with a toxic mix of fear and pain; many could not perform the most basic tasks for themselves. Someone had to feed them, bathe them, and help them to the bathroom. It was humiliating. They worried that their women wouldn't want them back. They worried that they wouldn't be able to care for their kids when they couldn't even tie their shoelaces or use a fork.

Weisskopf uses his own trials and the experiences of three other men to tell the story of this war's wounded. For Peter John Damon, a Massachusetts National Guardsman and helicopter technician whose hands had been sliced off in a freak accident, recovery at Walter Reed was about relearning how to perform the most prosaic tasks. Soaping himself in the shower meant lathering up a hand towel or terry-cloth mitt between his stumps and washing thoroughly. Cleaning his behind after using the toilet meant carefully laying baby wipes around the seat and sweeping the wipes into the bowl after he was finished. Going outside for a smoke was also a carefully planned maneuver: Pete would drop the pack in a baseball hat that lay on his bed, bend over, put the hat on, go outside, drop the hat off his head, pry a cigarette out of the pack, and cadge a light off another smoker. "The sight of Pete attached to an IV pole and a Marlboro became part of Ward 57 lore," notes Weisskopf with amusement.

After the attacks on the Twin Towers in September 2001, Damon was sent to Fort Bragg. A whiz at almost any kind of repair, he decided to become a helicopter mechanic. In October 2003, he was inflating a tire on a Black Hawk in Iraq when the metal rim around the tire exploded. The pieces tore into Damon, cutting one arm off below the elbow and the other just above. His hands were gone, but he was still alive, and for that Damon was grateful.

> Blood Brothers *is a tightly written insider account of what has become an all-too-frequent experience of those serving in Iraq: losing a limb.*

Corporal Robert Blan Isaacs III joined the Army after the 9/11 attacks. The sunny, sweet twenty-two-year-old

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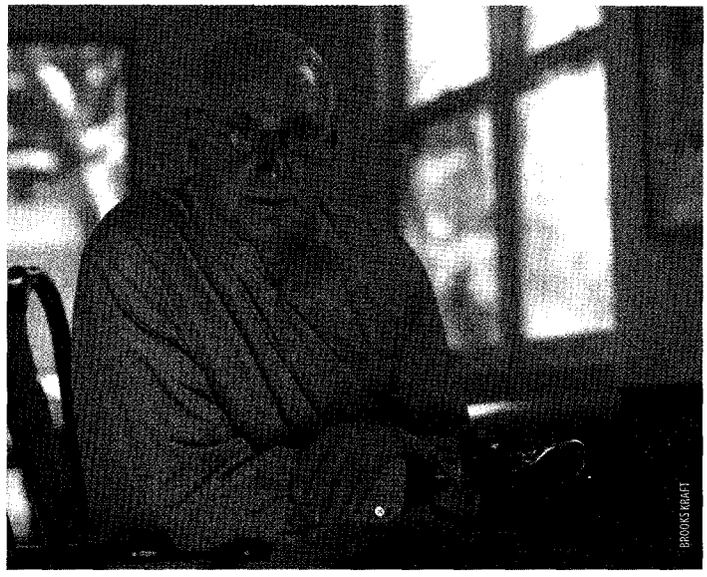
from North Carolina was in a Humvee idling yards away from the 101st Division headquarters in Mosul when a roadside bomb exploded nearby. The blast killed his squad leader and shattered both Isaacs's legs so badly that he lost nearly all the blood in his body and had to be fully transfused. By the time he got to Walter Reed, it wasn't at all clear that he would make it. Two amputations and forty-plus surgeries later, Bobby returned home to North Carolina, a hero to his mother and his community. But to him his loss was not a great sacrifice—it was simply the price he willingly paid for service to his country. "I'd do it again," he told Weisskopf.

For Sergeant Luis Rodriguez, a medic, coming to terms with the loss wasn't about country, it was about family—his brothers in arms and his platoon of medics. Rod, as he was called, grew up in a low-income suburb of San Juan, and the only thing he ever wanted to be was an Army medic. And he became one of the best, earning a Bronze Star, an honor rarely given to a medic. But like dozens of the men he saved in Iraq, Rod became a casualty of a bomb in his Humvee. In the explosion, he lost his right leg at the knee. "The bomb severed more than a limb," says Weisskopf. "It dismantled Rod's identity."

The issues for amputees remain the same as they've always been: how to tie your shoes in less than fifteen minutes, how to walk up the stairs, how to find a date or keep your wife from going AWOL.



Michael Weisskopf, author of *Blood Brothers*, back in the United States after losing his right hand on assignment in Iraq

Blood Brothers also deals in meticulous detail with the facts of Weisskopf's own injury. We are taken step-by-step through explanations of multiple surgeries to remove what was left of his useless right hand to ready it for the prosthesis. We are led through physical and occupational therapies, the real and the phantom pain (the severe discomfort amputees suffer from nerves that continue to tell the brain that the lost limb is there). We are told of the author's increasing doses of narcotics, to get him not only through the day but through the next hour. Finally, there is the fitting of various prosthetics, their repeated failures, and, finally, Weisskopf's decision to give up the idea of using a high-tech, upper-extremity prosthetic like a myoelectric arm and to rely instead on a simple hook. The process is harrowing. "Technicians spent hours tweaking the prosthesis," writes Weisskopf, "curving plastic here, cutting it there. Nothing worked. Easing the pressure from the elbow loosened the suspension. Either it pinched or it slipped off. The best they could do was reach an unhappy medium. It hurt some and it slipped some."

The issues for amputees largely remain the same as they've always been: how to tie your shoes in less than fifteen minutes, how to walk up the stairs, how to hold on to a job, how to find a date or keep a wife from going AWOL. Stumps atrophy. Bone spurs develop that necessitate repeated surgeries. Ulcers form on skin surfaces and run the risk of infection. The $50,000 state-of-the-art, computer-programmed C-Legs and prosthetic arms have to be constantly readjusted. And there is the ever-present pain: as one of the physicians at Walter Reed tells amputees in regard to their phantom pain, "It may go away. It may stay the same, and it may get worse."

But with time and therapy, Weisskopf and his fellow patients overcame many of these hurdles: Pete Damon, once a talented artist, learned how to draw all over again with a pencil clamped in his prosthetic hook. Luis Rodriguez became a teacher of an advanced course for the medics in training at the Fort Campbell Rascon School of Combat Medicine. Bobby Isaacs dreams of being a physician's assistant. As for Weisskopf, he has returned to his perch at *Time*. With the help of a waterproof prosthesis, he is able to go swimming. He can open a bottle of wine, and write on a computer using voice-recognition software. What happened to Weisskopf was a piece of terrible luck. But he has put his experience to good use, and given the rest of us a real insight into the private worlds of the injured soldiers who are coming back from this war in the thousands. WM

Ronald Glasser is an author and physician assigned to Camp Zama during the Vietnam War. His most recent book is called *Wounded: Vietnam to Iraq*.

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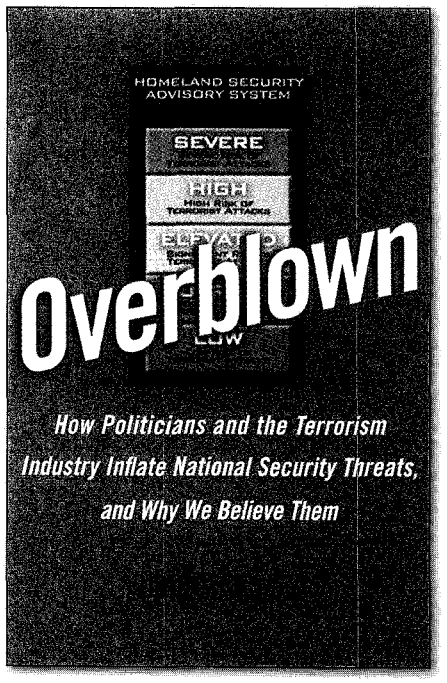
BUT FEAR ITSELF

Are we overreacting to the terrorist threat?

By Avi Klein



Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them

By John Mueller
Free Press, 272 pp.

With public alarm over terrorism still running high in America, and with media outlets such as the Drudge Report and Fox News continually stoking such fears, one might be forgiven for overlooking the fact that the United States hasn't experienced an attack on its own soil since 9/11. Despite initial fears that more than 5,000 operatives and sympathizers were active within our borders, the government has not identified a single cell, nor have its comprehensive visitor- and immigration-screening programs discovered many suspects trying to get in. Of course, it could be that al-Qaeda is too sophisticated for our defenses. Terrorist methods, we have been led to believe, often outstrip the sophistication of the world's best intelligence agencies.

Or maybe we're simply not as endangered as we feel. That's the case that Ohio State University political science professor and noted contrarian John Mueller sets out to make in *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them*.

Overblown is a polemical, sometimes tedious, but important book that delights in the same exasperated enthusiasm in busting up conventional wisdom about homeland security that Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion* enjoys regarding organized religion. "A threat that is real but likely to prove to be of limited scope has been massively, perhaps even fancifully, inflated to produce widespread and unjustified anxiety," Mueller writes. This has caused the United States to harm itself by overreacting with wasteful spending and war.

Overblown argues that the United States has been overestimating threats since at least as far back as the 1930s. As Mueller writes, "every foreign policy threat in the past several decades that has come to be accepted as significant has then eventually been unwisely exaggerated." And he does mean "every." Among his examples of U.S. overreaction are the invasion of Panama, the Gulf War, the war in Afghanistan, and even World War II. In all of these cases, Mueller believes American planners allowed fear and hysteria rather than sober-minded judgment to rule their decision-making processes. "The enemy, pretty much, is us," he states.

> Overblown *argues that the United States has been overestimating threats since at least as far back as the 1930s.*

This is obviously not a man who's afraid of provocative claims. For example, Mueller asserts that the bombing of Pearl Harbor did not require all-out war in response. Instead, American planners should have employed a policy of containment and harassment against Japan, undercutting the militarists in the Japanese government and providing cover for moderates who urged restraint. If not for Roosevelt's overreaction, millions of lives and dollars would have been saved.

Mueller is no less compromising on the U.S. policy of containment against the Soviet Union practiced during the cold war. According to Mueller, this too was unnecessary. After all, if George Kennan was right to say that an expansionist Soviet Union

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would eventually rot from within, then surely the best policy would have been to hasten that fateful day by allowing it to expand.

Most readers, of course, will be justifiably put off by such reasoning. But it is worth postponing the urge to throw the book across the room in order to get to the more persuasive arguments the author makes about terrorism.

As Mueller points out, every bust of a terrorism suspect in the United States has ended up being less important than originally claimed. Jose Padilla never got anywhere close to manufacturing a dirty bomb, if indeed he ever intended to. (The charge was dropped when he was removed from military custody into federal court, where the burden of proof for such a charge is much greater than in the media.) Indeed, no one has yet unearthed a genuine terrorist cell operating within the United States. Perhaps, Mueller writes, "an entirely plausible explanation" is that "there is no significant international terrorist presence in this country." Having failed to plant a sleeper network prior to the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda simply can't get past our much-improved visa screening procedures.

Every bust of a terrorism suspect in the United States has ended up being less important than originally claimed.

Overblown also stresses that real danger requires both intent and capacity, the latter of which is much more limited than typically believed. Apart from a few films of dogs being poisoned, there is little evidence that Islamic terrorists have ever succeeded in obtaining weapons of mass destruction. Such weapons are hard to get, and even harder to use, since radioactive materials and biological agents typically threaten their handlers long before they can be weaponized. Even if al-Qaeda were to succeed in manufacturing such horrors—at secret university-grade labs in the Pakistani mountains, perhaps—Mueller rightly points out that the weapons would still induce more fear than damage. Anthrax is deadly but infects slowly, providing ample time for countermeasures, and "even then effective dispersal could easily be interrupted by unfavorable environmental and meteorological conditions." A "dirty bomb" would cause panic but not necessarily more death than a conventional one. And al-Qaeda clearly prefers martyrdom operations to standoff attacks, so it seems likely that they will continue with the same methods that have worked in the past. "The truly notable innovation for terrorists over the past few decades has not been in qualitative improvements in ordnance at all," Mueller says, "but rather in a more effective method for delivering it: the suicide bomber." Such damage, he points out, can "be readily absorbed." We absorbed it on 9/11; so too did the British and Spanish last year. To call such threats existential, Mueller argues, "is somewhere between extravagant and absurd."

KEN SHIMATU/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Overblown? The latest in hazmat *haute couture*

Unfortunately, policy making since 9/11 hardly reflects such thinking. Instead, we are spending money on fanciful threats—and spending it heavily. According to one 2006 congressional report, $34 billion in homeland security projects "experienced significant overcharges, wasteful spending, or mismanagement." And that's not accounting for opportunity costs. "In 2005," Mueller notes, "758 scientists, including two Nobel Prize winners, raised an outcry because of what they saw as a major shift of research funds from pathogens of high public health significance to obscure organisms of high biodefense, but low public health, importance." An overemphasis may have also worsened the effects of Hurricane Katrina, with $2 billion spent on counterterrorism grants to states but only $180 million for natural disasters.

While Mueller makes a good case for the extent and cost of our overreaction, he has little to say, regrettably, about what we should actually do about it. Mueller is far less interested, it seems, in the minutiae of policy than in shaping the thoughts of the public. "Because the main cost of terrorism generally derives from the anguish and overreaction of the terrorized," he says, "policies should seek to reduce the fear and anxiety that are so often unjustified and costly and do so as inexpensively as possible." To this end, he supports the same policies that security guru Bruce Schnei-

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er has derided as "security theater"—the airport checkpoint rituals that add little value other than to make it appear that the government is taking fears seriously. "Politicians should constantly be on the look-out for cheap, even costless measures that reduce fear," Mueller counsels. As for cutting down on the waste and disorder we see today, Mueller has little to offer other than a call for the elimination of the air marshals program, on the sensible grounds that cabin-door locks have eliminated the hijacking threat.

This may be sound advice, but it's terribly limited. That's a shame, because preventing most terrorism mainly involves simple commonsense measures, and the book would have benefited from a description of them. One thing that works is a strong border-control system, as we've seen in Israel. (In this way, protecting the homeland is very much like protecting the home: keeping the doors and windows locked removes most of the risk, reliably and with little cost and inconvenience.) Standardized driver's licenses and government employee identification cards are also helpful. And securing against the most dangerous attacks of all, such as those on chemical plants, makes sense, so that terrorists can kill only hundreds, not thousands, at one time.

Still, while Mueller's book is far from perfect, it's a welcome counter to much of the alarmism that passes for analysis these days. It also has an interesting idea for the press, which has done so much to stoke public fears. "A useful public service would be to cumulate a record of the many false warnings that have been issued by the terrorism industry," Mueller suggests. "A systematic and very public tabulation of such doomsaying might prove to be a notable contribution to fear reduction. Someone should try." Whoever decides to take up this call won't be assuming a heavy burden. The Drudge Report archives are right there on the Web. WM

Avi Klein is senior writer at *Homeland Security Daily Wire.*

— Invisible peril —

If men* were to see the state of the world as we, the Masters, see, they would be amazed, dumbfounded and afraid, all at the same time. So far from the reality is man's view of conditions on Earth, and so lacking in judgement is he about future possibilities, that, without help, man would watch his planetary home languish and die.

As it is, planet Earth is in a sad and perilous condition while each day brings it nearer to the critical. Many voices have sounded warnings on global warming, and many views have been expressed, but even the most dire prophecy falls short of the calamity facing the world today. Few there are who see the immediacy of the threat and the urgency of the steps needed to counter it.

Great as is the peril posed by global warming, this, unfortunately, is not the greatest, or most hazardous, faced by man today. Did he but know it, man is engaged in a slow but steadily increasing intoxification of the race and of the lower kingdoms. Toxicity, pollution, of all kinds, and in all fields, is now the greatest danger to men, animals and the Earth itself. All are poisoned and sick in their own way.

Unknown to men but evident to us, the greatest harm sustained by men and planet in this sorry tale is caused by nuclear radiation. Men have gone far astray in the development of this most dangerous energetic source. Led astray by greed, and the false hope of vast profits, they have concentrated their experiments in 'taming' the most dangerous source of energy ever discovered by man, neglecting, meanwhile, a perfectly safe alternative use of the energy of the atom. Atomic fusion, cold and harmless, could be theirs from a simple isotope of water, everywhere available in the oceans, seas and rivers, and in every shower of rain.

Man must cease his 'toying with death'. Atomic fission is the result of the atomic bombs which destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki; which erupted in Chernobyl and causes, subtly, death and sickness today. It is "that which stands where it ought not" and which must be renounced by man if he would prosper further.

Earth scientists are confident that they have, indeed, tamed the monster, and can keep it under control. They do not realize that their instruments are crude indeed, that they measure only the lower aspects of nuclear radiation, that stretching above these dense-physical levels are levels finer and more dangerous to the health and well-being of all. But for the tireless efforts of our Extra-planetary Brothers in assuaging this invisible peril in so far as the karmic law allows, our plight would be perilous indeed. Wake up, mankind!

This article, published in *Share International* magazine, was written by a Master of Wisdom. The Masters, headed by Maitreya, the World Teacher, are highly advanced teachers and advisors of humanity who are planning to work openly in the world very soon.

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*men is a general term meaning humankind

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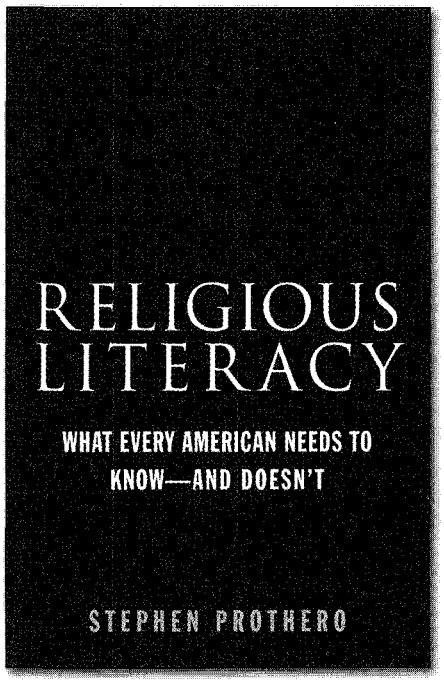
JOAN OF ARC, WIFE OF NOAH?

Why Johnny can't quote Scripture, and why it matters

By Randall Balmer



Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't
By Stephen Prothero
HarperSanFrancisco, 304 pp.

Several years ago, as workers were preparing to cart away the 5,280-pound granite monument emblazoned with the Ten Commandments that Roy Moore had plopped into the lobby of the Alabama Judicial Building, one of the assembled protesters screamed, "Get your hands off my God!" Apparently, this poor soul had never seriously considered that one of the commandments etched into "Roy's Rock" had something to say about graven images.

Such is the sorry state of religious literacy in the United States today. Stephen Prothero, professor and chair of the religion department at Boston University and author of the acclaimed *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon*, argues in his remarkable new book, *Religious Literacy*, that Americans are woefully ignorant about the very matters of faith, religion, and theology that they purport to hold so dear. "Americans are both deeply religious and profoundly ignorant about religion," he writes.

Consider the evidence. Many high school seniors believe that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife, while a majority of Americans cannot name one of the four Gospels. Jay Leno asked his *Tonight Show* audience one night to name one of Jesus' twelve apostles; they came up empty. One in ten Americans believes that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife, and only one-third knows that Jesus (not Billy Graham) preached the Sermon on the Mount. One of the most frequently quoted passages from the Bible—"God helps those who help themselves"—actually appears nowhere in either the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament.

And then there was the hapless Howard Dean. When asked during the course of the 2004 presidential primaries to name his favorite book in the New Testament, the former governor of Vermont stammered and finally blurted out "Job," a book located for centuries squarely in middle of the Hebrew scriptures.

All of this folly could be passed off as harmless ignorance, but Prothero argues otherwise. Scarcely a day passes when a story related to religion doesn't grace (pun intended) the front page of the daily newspaper, be it the Sunni-Shiite violence of Iraq's civil war, the sophomoric "pro-life" *versus* "pro-choice" bumper-sticker war, the persistent tensions between Muslims and Hindus in South Asia, the endless cycle of violence in Palestine, or even the debate over global warming.

Prothero is not the first to point out Americans' religious illiteracy, but his book is an especially deft examination of the reasons for it. (His focus is on biblical illiteracy, but he touches on ignorance in other faiths as well.) Prothero lays much of the blame on publishers of school textbooks and public education generally. Ever since the school-prayer rulings in the early 1960s, which effectively banned communal prayer in public schools, both publishers and school officials have been chary about dealing with religion in the classroom. School officials fail to make the fundamental distinction between the "teach-

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ing of religion" and the "teaching about religion." The former, as Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg pointed out at the time, is unconstitutional, while the latter is not. Those who would strip religious considerations out of, say, the founding of Massachusetts or the doctrine of Manifest Destiny or American foreign policy in the Middle East leave us with an impoverished understanding of American history and culture.

But the roots of America's religious illiteracy go deeper than that. Common schools (as nineteenth-century public schools were known) gradually assumed the task of training in literacy that Sunday schools had performed earlier. With the advent of public education, Sunday schools shifted back to religious instruction, and the bifurcation between the two eventually bracketed religion from the curricula of public schools. The *New England Primer*, a basic educational text for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, gave way to William Holmes McGuffey's *Eclectic Readers* of the nineteenth century. "If the point of the *New England Primer* was to teach children that they were sinners and that Jesus died to save them from their sins," Prothero notes, "the point of the later McGuffey readers was to teach children that God wanted them to work hard, save their money, tell the truth, and avoid alcohol."

Faith and religious literacy, in effect, gave way to morality. Prothero writes,

> *In other words, we had already taken one giant step toward the contemporary era in which morality is the essence of religion and the term Christian connotes opposition to abortion and gay marriage rather than faith in the incarnation and the redemption—an era in which having a relationship with Jesus is more important than knowing what he actually did, in which believing in the Bible matters more than knowing what the Bible has to say.*

Prothero's second historical explanation for America's religious illiteracy, however, is somewhat less persuasive. He argues that the emphasis on religious piety caused some evangelicals to view the intellectual understanding of religion with suspicion—indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, "a lack of elementary knowledge of Christianity would constitute evidence of authentic faith." The holiness movement of the nineteenth century, which attempted to restore spiritual ardor to Methodism and other Protestant denominations, was in fact inordinately suspicious of educated clergy, the supposition being that education crowds out piety (an axiom that anyone associated with divinity schools might be hard pressed to refute).

> *When Howard Dean was asked to name his favorite book in the New Testament, he blurted out "Job," a book located in the Hebrew scriptures.*

But such an indictment ignores the fact that evangelicals—fundamentalists especially—care deeply about matters of faith and theology; they embrace a kind of doctrinal precisionism. Some of the most bitter intellectual and theological disputes of the twentieth century, in fact, stem from the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s, which divided Protestant denominations along liberal-conservative lines. Conservatives claimed, with some justification, that they demonstrated more fidelity to the scriptures and had a firmer grasp on the historic doctrines of the faith. Liberals, they charged (again, not entirely without foundation), had discarded the rudiments of orthodoxy in favor of an intellectually flaccid religion that owed more to the currents of popular culture than to theological understanding or insight.

The persistent evangelical allegiance to doctrine manifests itself in numberless ways, not least a mechanistic approach to the Bible that often yields an arid scholasticism. But evangelicals take the Bible and the task of theology very seriously indeed. The tussle over intelligent design, for instance, which amounts to an effort to baptize creationism as science, or the evangelical insistence on the "inerrancy" of the Bible, suggest that evangelicals are trying to refight the intellectual and theological battles they lost in the nineteenth century. If Prothero means to suggest, or even to infer, that the average mainline Protestant has a firmer grasp on theology and religious literacy than a pietistic evangelical, he fails to make his case.

Still, the overall point about religious illiteracy and the shift from theology to morality is a sound one. The remedy? Prothero insists that the proper venue for catechetical religious instruction is the home or a place of worship. But he says there is no reason whatsoever, misguided readings of the First Amendment notwithstanding, that religion or even the Bible cannot be taught in public schools. It's also essential for responsible citizenship, he argues, especially in a pluralistic society and in the midst of a shrinking world.

Prothero proposes, in short, to add a fourth R, religion, to the traditional three Rs, reading, writing, and 'rithmetic. "My goal," he writes, "is civic rather than theological ... My brief for religious literacy proceeds on secular grounds, on the theory that Americans are not equipped for citizenship (or, for that matter, cocktail party conversation) without a basic understanding of Christianity and the world's religions."

It's hard to quarrel with such a statement. Sounds almost, well, biblical. WM

Randall Balmer, an Episcopal priest, is professor of American religious history at Barnard College, and a visiting professor at Yale University Divinity School. His most recent book is *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America*.

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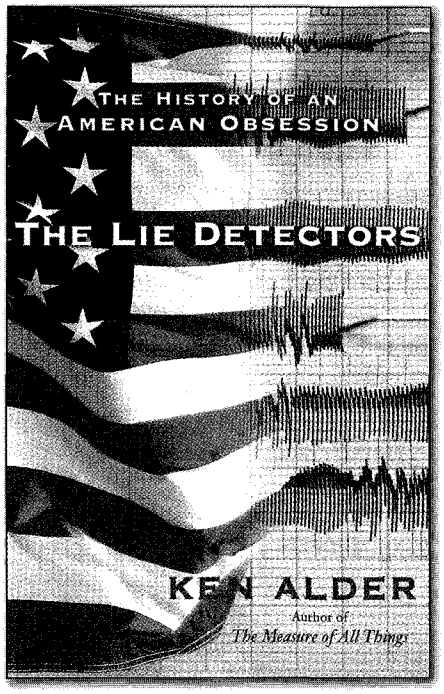
THE BIG LIE

How America became obsessed with the polygraph—even though it has never really worked

By David Wallace-Wells



The Lie Detectors: The History of an American Obsession

By Ken Alder

Free Press, 334 pp.

In May 1922, a wealthy family of four was driving home to San Francisco from a day trip in the Santa Cruz mountains when a second car forced them off the road. A gunman stuck a revolver through the driver's window and demanded money. The father, Henry Wilkins, handed him three $100 bills, but the bandit lunged for Anna Wilkins's diamond rings. Enraged, Henry reached for a gun stowed in his glove compartment, his two young children bunkered in the backseat, but the robber shot first, killing Anna Wilkins and disappearing before Henry could respond. "My daddy loved my mother," the Wilkinses' eight-year-old son testified. "She died to save the bandit's bullet from hitting him."

The police were not so sure. A few days after the murder, two brothers, local ex-convicts, tried to buy gas with a conspicuous $100 bill, and were picked up. Wilkins claimed he didn't know the men, but police later discovered Wilkins had previously employed one of them himself, in his auto shop. They told Wilkins that the best chance of clearing his name was to submit to examination on an oracular device that had come to be known in the tabloid press as "the lie detector."

The machine, a Rube Goldberg contraption of tubes, pumps, wires, and meters designed to monitor the subject's vital signs and record on smoke-blackened paper telltale jumps in blood pressure and breathing rate, was then chiefly known for finding thieves among honest sorority sisters in a series of breathlessly reported penny-ante Berkeley capers. Wilkins submitted and, as the city watched, passed the test; the police dropped the investigation, and Wilkins was invited to leave the courthouse unmolested. From there he went to meet one of the convicts he had earlier failed to identify. Money changed hands, and Wilkins was heard boasting about his performance on the polygraph. A month later, the other brother, already in jail on other charges, admitted that Wilkins had indeed paid the men to kill his wife and orchestrated the incident on the road. Furious and humiliated, San Francisco police vowed never to employ the lie detector again; at the next meeting of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, their captain declared that future use of the polygraph could not be countenanced.

Since its American debut, the lie detector has been a persistent but extralegal feature of our juridical culture, not much evolved from the faulty contraption employed in San Francisco in 1922. The device has been derided by teams of experts as junk science, hardly more reliable than methods of pure chance, barred from the courts, a favorite tool of overzealous investigators and an instrument of state-sponsored vigilantism, a handmaiden to McCarthyism, an accomplice to the pink scare, and a nightmare vision of justice as arbitrary and expansive as the judgment of a totalitarian court, in a box no bigger or more conspicuous than the briefcase of a company man. And yet, as Ken Alder shows in his revealing, colloquial social history *The Lie Detectors*, by the time scientific scrutiny finally caught up to the scientistic ambition of the device in the late 1980s, generations of Americans had been seduced by it. For decades, the polygraph was a trusted tool of justice, treasured by beat cops and internal affairs inves-

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tigators alike, celebrated across popular culture as an unerring arbiter of honesty and public virtue, used to test patients in psychiatric hospitals and job applicants in corporate interviews, and entrusted with some of the most valued secrets of the atomic age, the twitchy mechanical conscience of the cold war era. How did this happen?

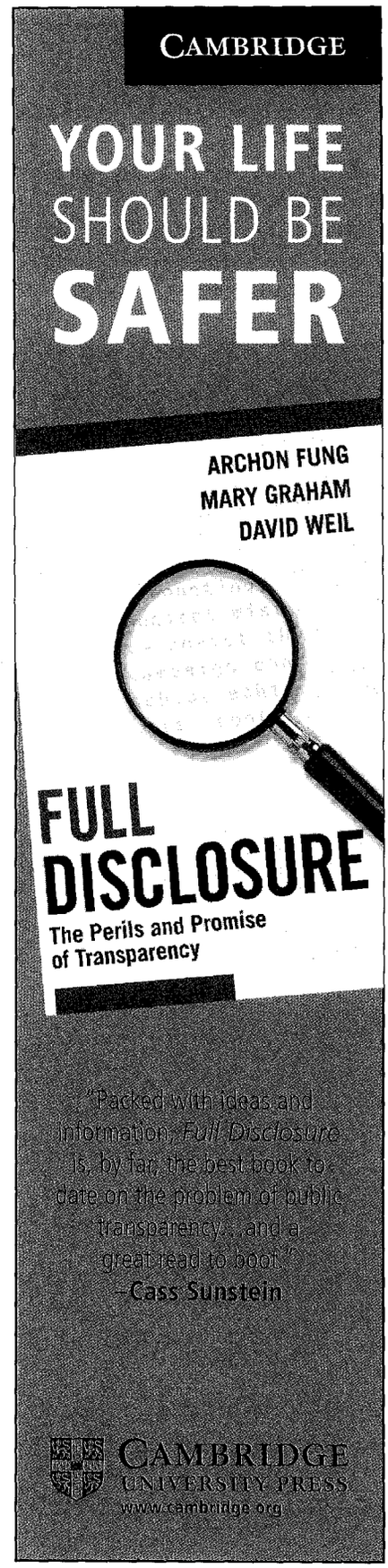
The Lie Detectors is a shaggy dog, unruly with anecdotes and built loosely around the narratives of two outsize Jazz Age personalities: Leonarde Keeler, an avid amateur polygraph enthusiast, a charmer, a womanizer, and a drunk; and John Larson, a psychologist and America's first doctoral cop, who adapted and refined the lie detector from an earlier model assembled by the creator of *Wonder Woman*. In ascribing the power of the polygraph to the charismatic salesmanship of a huckster playboy and a starry-eyed psychologist, Alder suggests that the device represents neatly the scientific hubris and human folly of the machine age. The polygraph, he writes, belonged to the "American strain of the Enlightenment project to replace personal discretion with objective measures, and political conflict with science," and transform the central moral questions of our society into simple matters for scientific inquiry. A tall order.

One field that *could* legitimately benefit from such a scientific approach was law enforcement. At the time, rural justice in America could still resemble the lynch mob, and many cities were policed by corrupt departments rife with patronage and mob influence, and willing to countenance even the most brutal forms of interrogation. In some quarters, Alder writes, critics were so outraged by the methods employed by city cops that they called on courts to reclaim from police departments the long-lost monopoly on interrogating suspects.

At first blush, the polygraph appeared to offer an alternative. The device came to prominence in Berkeley, California, where a legendary cop ran a small station house as a laboratory for progressive police methods. August Vollmer was the first chief in America to employ squad cars, install radio systems, and map area crimes to study the efficacy of various police methods. He introduced merit-based promotion, opened a police school for his officers, and invented a system for filing evidence that became the model for the state of California, and later, under J. Edgar Hoover, the nation. The lie detector, which John Larson developed and Leonarde Keeler publicized for Vollmer, was the most vaunted product of his program of police professionalization, and it arrived on the national stage bearing his imprimatur.

The device appealed to police as a potent interrogatory tool, to reformers as a way to replace the ugly human science of law enforcement with an objective science of criminology, and ultimately to government officials who hoped to police the inner lives of citizens in the name of national security. By the early 1950s, Alder reports, the lie detector had become the de facto police force in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where federally managed plants produced much of the nuclear fissile material used in the early atomic era. In 1951, the *New York Times* reported that polygraph testing had become commonplace within the CIA, and by 1953 the Army routinely tested its ranks on the device for hints of treasonous sentiment.

Unfortunately, the device did not work. The polygraph can be an aid in interrogation, helping guide inquisitors in their questioning, but it fails, by leagues, any reasonable standard of reliability for determining guilt. The lie detector does not pierce the opacity of the human psyche or solve the mind-body problem, as early proponents insisted, but merely measures metabolic functions, which detectives can then interpret for signs of anxiety. In 1951, Larson estimated the error rate of polygraph readings as high as 40 percent. In 2003, the National Academy of Sciences found that no scientific study of any rigor had yet been published demonstrating the validity of the polygraph test.



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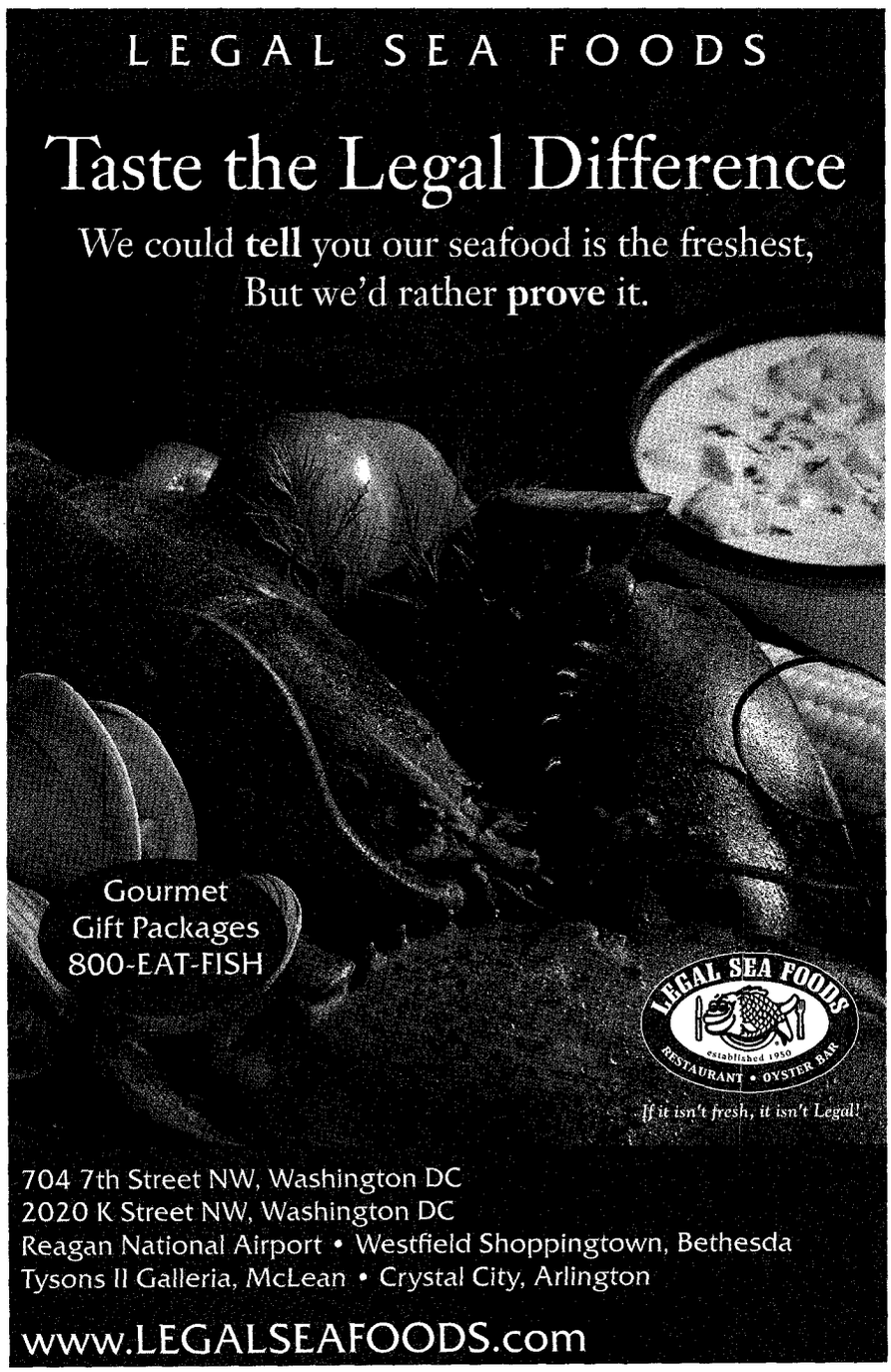
Polygraph testing is a placebo science, then, and as Alder points out, the first step in staging such a test must always be convincing the subject that the machine does, in fact, work; only then will the stakes seem high enough to produce anxiety levels in the suspect elevated enough to suggest deception. (Keeler, for one, always boasted of his ability to beat the machine, though he trusted it enough to strap himself in during psychoanalysis.) As a placebo, the polygraph can often be exchanged for a prop. In the last several decades, Alder reports, "cops have taken to placing the suspect's head in a colander with wires attached." Baltimore police have extracted confessions by placing suspects' hands on a copying machine filled with paper preprinted with the word *LIE!* The polygraph ultimately fell out of favor not when detectives lost faith in its reliability, but only when DNA evidence replaced the confession as the Holy Grail of investigative work. As heightened public scrutiny cleared cobwebs from the final shadowy corners of American police work in recent decades, the resilient lie detector has been relegated to a cherished tool of celebrity culture, part of a standard plea to regain the trust of the American people.

Not surprisingly, despite its remarkable American appeal, the lie detector has never caught on abroad. In his lifetime, Leonarde Keeler sold only one polygraph outside the country. Canadians dismissed the device as sham pseudoscience, and the French had a substitute fetish for the subtler superstition of handwriting analysis. Machines resembling polygraphs were seen in space-age Russia only in spy movies, when captured KGB agents routinely outsmarted them.

Though Alder chooses to trace the rise of the lie detector to the tireless salesmanship of Leonarde Keeler, what distinguishes the polygraph from other forms of snake oil is not the way it was sold, but the fact that it was bought at all. The success of the dubious machine reflects not the P. T. Barnum cynicism of Keeler but Larson's American brand of scientific utopianism. The lie detector appealed particularly to Americans because it accorded with our Manichean ethics, seemed to fulfill our aspiration that the law be objective and equanimous, attested that personal virtue was a form of patriotic loyalty, assured us, in the atomic age, that some of our most troubling science was managed by responsible hands for noble purposes, and suggested naively that crime might be not morally complex but scientifically simple. "Who but a Yankee would think of proving anything from heart-throbs?" asked G. K. Chesterton's fictional detective, Father Brown. "Why, they must be as sentimental as a man who thinks a woman is in love with him if she blushes." WM

David Wallace-Wells is a writer living in New York.



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